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## FIFTY YEARS OF PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

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TEN YEARS' INVESTIGATION OF BORLEY  
RECTORY (in preparation)





The spirit of 'Katie King', photographed by Sir William Crookes in 1874, through the mediumship of Florrie Cook. The figure is just emerging from the cabinet. Dr. Gully of Malvern is in the foreground.

*Frontispiece*

FIFTY YEARS OF  
PSYCHICAL RESEARCH  
A CRITICAL SURVEY

*By*

HARRY PRICE

*Honorary Secretary, University of London  
Council for Psychical Investigation*

*With Illustrations*

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.  
LONDON ◊ ◊ NEW YORK ◊ ◊ TORONTO

~~39~~ LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO. LTD.

~~17~~ PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON, E.C.4  
CHITTARANJAN AVENUE, CALCUTTA  
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114 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK  
221 EAST 20TH STREET, CHICAGO  
88 TREMONT STREET, BOSTON

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.

215 VICTORIA STREET, TORONTO

## PREFACE

**FIFTY YEARS OF PSYCHICAL RESEARCH** is the fulfilment of a mental resolution, made many years ago, that some day I would write a continuation of Podmore's classic history of the alleged abnormal which he termed *Modern Spiritualism*. This work was published in London in 1902 and is still the standard book of the period with which it deals. But in preparing the plan of the present volume, it was found necessary to encroach on Podmore's territory to a certain extent, as I decided to extend the scope of my record so as to cover the last half-century.

Though fewer than thirty years have passed since Frank Podmore (1856-1910) met with a tragic death<sup>1</sup> in the Malvern Hills, a vast change has taken place in the examination of alleged phenomena, in the technique employed, and even in some of the manifestations which are investigated. For example, the 'spirit photographs' of Podmore's time are quite different from those produced by photographic mediums of to-day, and other forms of mediumship—real or alleged—have become fashionable. Even the fraudulent purveyor of 'miracles' has discovered new tricks with which to cheat the ignorant and credulous, as the reader will discover. But the greatest changes have occurred in the new methods of investigation, which are now being used by scientists and in the universities. Positive results obtained by these methods have been the means of convincing sceptical orthodoxy (usually in the shape of incredulous physicists) of the value of psychical research. The close collaboration between séance-room and laboratory is at last bearing fruit.

I have endeavoured to make this work not merely a history of psychical research, but a record of the principal experiments which have been carried out, with the results obtained. To the layman, it is the experiments which are the most interesting. Also—and again on the layman's behalf

<sup>1</sup> See *The Times* for August 20, 1910.



—I have deliberately chosen language which he can understand. For less simple language and technical accounts of our work, he must consult the *Bulletins*, *Proceedings* and *Journals* of the various psychical societies. I must emphasize that any opinion or conclusion expressed by me in the following pages is purely personal and unofficial.

I must warn the reader that this is not a history of fortune-telling, but of psychical research and spiritualism. The reason I mention this is because so many spiritualists are interested in astrology, numerology, graphology, palmistry, interpretation of dreams and similar superstitions which, very curiously, are now such popular features in many of our journals. But the newspapers would not devote space to these subjects if there was no demand for information concerning them; and this demand is the direct outcome of a nearly universal and ever-growing hunger for the marvellous, and the inveterate longing to know what the future holds for us.

• It will be noted that in the following pages I have used the word 'spiritualism' in preference to 'spiritism.' Actually, the latter term is the more correct as there is little of spirituality in most of the phenomena, genuine or otherwise, seen either in or out of the séance-room. But the spiritualists themselves dislike the word spiritism because their most bitter opponents—the Roman Catholics—always employ it. So do the French. Logically, if there are substances or beings not cognizable by the sensory organs, under normal conditions, and these are of a spirit nature (as the spiritualists contend) then, I think, spiritism is the correct word. But I have no wish to offend my friends the spiritualists, though I must remind them that they have no good title to the word 'spiritualism,' which in its ancient and historic sense was a philosophic term meaning the opposite to materialism. I have also endeavoured to avoid using the word 'supernatural.' If a phenomenon occurs in Nature, it *must* be natural, even though we are ignorant of the laws which govern it. I suggest that a more suitable term is 'supernormal.' But Richet rejects<sup>1</sup> even this as being inadmissible 'for there can be nothing in the universe but the natural and

<sup>1</sup> *Thirty Years of Psychical Research*, London, 1923, pp. 364.

the normal.' In 1905 he proposed the word 'metapsychic,' which has been adopted by many Continental psychists, though the Germans and some others prefer the term 'parapsychic.' Probably the best term of all is 'paranormal.'

Certain of the chapters in this work formed the basis for a course of lectures which I delivered in the University of London during February and March, 1939; and, with some exceptions, all the books and documents cited in the following pages are to be found in the 'Harry Price Library of Magical Literature' in the University of London.

H. P.

19, Berkeley Street,  
Mayfair, W.1.



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## INTRODUCTION

### WHAT IS PSYCHICAL RESEARCH?

**B**EFORE the reader proceeds further, he should know what is meant by the words 'psychical research' and 'spiritualism.' Both are modern terms, though there is evidence that the phenomena which are investigated by the researchers, and exploited by some spiritualists, have been recorded for many hundreds of years. And this evidence comes to us from countries poles apart; from races civilized and savage; and from every period of history. The ghost stories of classical antiquity differ little from the experiences of the modern investigator, and the aboriginal is scared by exactly the same manifestations that intrigue the scientific ghost-hunter. When engaged on the present work I received reports concerning two haunted homes, one on an island in the Tonga group and one in Brixton: the former, a typical Polynesian wooden house; the latter, an artisan's dwelling. In both cases the phenomena were identical, stones and other small objects being thrown about, and the furniture moved. Both reports were authentic, and I am certain that the same law—if we can only find it—would explain the abnormal flight of coco-nut drinking-cups in the South Pacific and the equally strange shower of brickbats in a South London suburb.

### PSYCHICAL RESEARCH VERSUS SPIRITUALISM

Psychical research is a science and spiritualism is a religion. The genuine researchers have their laboratories and scientific equipment, their special apparatus for eliminating human testimony as far as possible, their scientific methodology, their critical analyses of the results obtained. Their reports are published in *Bulletins* and *Proceedings*, or in scientific



journals, and these records are entitled to rank with the best scientific literature.

As I have stated, spiritualism is, at its best, a religion; at its worst, a 'racket.' Spiritualists, though badly organized, have their churches and lyceums, inspirational speakers, trance preachers, special prayers and hymn books and their own special services for marriage, burial, etc. The Spiritualists' National Union was formed in 1891 in order to co-ordinate the movement in Great Britain, but is not representative of the movement as a whole. Spiritualism all over the world suffers from its Press. With some exceptions, the spiritualist journals are often badly written and edited, and a few are sensational to a degree. Sometimes their pages are devoted to private quarrels, personalities, abuse of the scientific researcher, gibes at the Church and mud-slinging at rival editors. The advertisement columns of some of these journals, especially in America, carry notices of fake mediums, worthless pieces of apparatus which are stated to work miracles, and similar rubbish. Certain of these psychic and occult sheets are the happy hunting-ground of the large army of charlatans who prey on credulity and make a fat living out of the bereaved, the diseased, the ignorant, and the morbidly curious. A medium convicted of fraud often depends upon the popular psychic Press for support and rehabilitation. At the time of writing, a man is serving a sentence of four months' imprisonment for mediumistic fraud at the same time as (a) a fund is being raised for him; (b) a book is being written about him, the proceeds of the sale going to the fund; (c) a society is making arrangements for him to continue his 'work' when he leaves prison; (d) and spiritualists are shrieking at the 'injustice' of the sentence, after the man had been convicted on the clearest evidence at a trial (and subsequent appeal) which lasted for weeks. If the fraudulent medium is made such a fuss of in this way, how much are we to believe of what the spiritualists themselves tell us? I reiterate that there are certain spiritualist papers which try to present to their readers an honest and dignified account of psychic happenings, and these the reader should consult. The editors of these journals are to be pitied, as it must be extraordinarily difficult to decide what to print,

in view of the sensational rubbish which emanates from the majority of séance-rooms.

A further difference between psychical research and spiritualism is a financial one. There is no money whatever in psychical research. The few societies that exist for the scientific investigation of alleged phenomena are usually poor, and are practically living from hand to mouth. Apart from their membership revenue, most of which is used for overhead and printing charges, they have little income. Money is rarely forthcoming for research purposes and they have a job to make both ends meet. A few secretaries and research officers are in receipt of modest salaries, but these people do this work because they like it. Some of them could probably earn much more in other fields of activity. It is a strange fact that few persons bequeath money for the furtherance of psychical research. However much a man (or more often a woman) identifies himself with psychics when alive, it is rarely that his financial support survives the grave. The reason is, I suppose, that one's interest in psychic matters is, usually, purely personal, and when one is gone, that is the end of it.

If there is no money in psychical research, there is plenty in spiritualism. Most of the big societies are prosperous, and the smaller ones keep going year after year. The major societies can afford large and expensive premises, well furnished, and well-paid secretaries to look after their interests. Their incomes are derived from membership subscriptions, the 'rake-off' they obtain from the fees of mediums whom they engage for their members; fees from those attending séances, lectures and social events (such as afternoon-tea meetings for 'psychic development'); and the sale of books and articles such as trumpets, ouija boards, crystals, etc. The revenue from services and lectures must be considerable. Some of the largest halls in London are booked for propaganda work and are usually well filled. Well-known spiritualist lecturers are engaged, often together with a trance medium or clairvoyant who delivers messages to the audience from the spirits alleged to be seen or heard.

The psychic Press supports a number of editors, writers and staff, not too well paid, but with comfortable jobs. Other

people who make money out of spiritualism are the mediums, real and alleged. A few successful trance mediums and clairvoyants earn large incomes, and at least one woman keeps two secretaries to look after her business. The big money is made by the mental mediums and rarely by the physical mediums for the simple reason that the 'staying powers' of the latter are not good. They are usually exposed by someone after a more or less successful run. But a really good physical medium, able to withstand scientific investigation in a laboratory, could literally make a fortune. Such reputed mediums appear from time to time, but after a while they are exposed, or their powers disappear just as the phenomena begin to get interesting.

Others who make money out of spiritualism are the people who run correspondence courses or home groups for 'psychic unfoldment' or 'development of powers'; those who hold classes for the purpose of turning the most unlikely material into (according to their advertisements) 'exceptionally powerful mediums.' These latter and similar concerns are often given high-sounding titles by those who run them, though usually they are located in the back parlours of suburban villadom. Finally, money is made by those manufacturing and selling the various articles and bits of apparatus for use in séances, home circles, or self-development of one's own latent psychic powers. A glance at the advertisements in most spiritualist papers will illustrate what I mean. There are big vested interests involved in the drama of proving there is life after death, and the business of 'selling spiritualism' has been reduced to a fine art.

#### SPIRITUALISM IS ANCIENT

It is generally accepted by people who should know better that spiritualism and its beliefs are of modern origin. Apart from the fact that many ancient peoples, civilized and savage, in all parts of the world, believed in some form of survival, we in England debated the question in our literature nearly four hundred years ago. Probably the first book in the English language to discuss the subject of 'survival,' as we

understand it to-day, was a translation of *De Spectris*, by Ludwig Lavater (1527–86), published at Zurich in 1570. Lavater was a ‘scientific’ writer who wrote with considerable scepticism of the things he records. The English edition<sup>1</sup> was published in London in 1572. In many respects, the book might have been written yesterday, instead of in the sixteenth century, and it is a fact that Shakespeare drew largely from the work when he wrote *Hamlet*. The first chapter ‘Concerning certaine wordes which are often used in this Treatise of Spirits’ deals with the term *spectrum*, defined as ‘a substance without a body, which beeing hearde or seene, maketh men afrayde,’ visions, and apparitions. The author then warns his readers to be critical of the evidence for spirits: ‘Melancholike persons, and madde men, imagin many things which in verie deede are not. Men which are dull of seing and hearing imagine many things which in verie deede are not so.’ Lavater then proceeds to describe various fraudulent phenomena and again warns us ‘That many naturall things are taken to be ghosts, as for example, when they heare the crying of rats, cats, weasles, martins, or any other beast, or when they heare a horse beate his feete on the planks in the stable at midnight, by and by they sweate for feare, supposing some buggs to walke in the dead of the night. . . . If a worme whiche fretteth wood, or that breadeth in trees chaunce to gnawe a wall or wainscot, or other tymber, many will judge they heare one softly knocking uppon an andviil with a sledge.’ Lavater knew his ‘sitters,’ who were much the same three hundred and sixty years ago as they are to-day. The remainder of the work deals with apparently genuine phenomena and the author discusses survival from every angle. Considering its antiquity, Lavater’s is an amazing work.

## SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY RESEARCH

If, as we have seen, the modern conception of ‘survival’ is not new, scientific research of the supposed phenomena is

<sup>1</sup> *Of ghostes and spiritres walking by nyght, and of strange noyses, crackes, and sundry forewarnynges, whiche commonly happen before the death of menne, great slaughters, & alterations of kyngdomes. . . . Written by Lewes Lauaterus, of Tigurine [Zurich], London, 1572.*

just as ancient. Of several typical cases which I could cite in order to support my argument that psychical research is not modern, I will choose the extraordinary affair of the Ringcroft disturbances. The report was carefully written up and published as a brochure in 1696.<sup>1</sup> The work deals with a typical case of haunting and materialization, with an account of *Poltergeist* disturbances which are familiar enough to modern investigators. I am including the story in this Introduction to prove my argument that the serious recording of psychical phenomena *is not modern*.

The chief fault of most ancient accounts of alleged abnormal happenings is that they are not well authenticated. The books or brochures containing these memorials of a by-gone age are valuable to a bibliophile, but are of little more than academic interest to the modern student of psychic phenomena. It is all the more refreshing then to find a book containing a summary of remarkable happenings which are thoroughly attested by a number of responsible persons. Moreover (and this fact is of extreme importance), each incident of the narrative is individually vouched for by the person or persons who witnessed the occurrence. This brochure of nineteen quarto pages was written by the minister of the parish in which the occurrences took place and the report is signed by the ministers of five neighbouring parishes; by the lairds of Colline and Milhouse; and several other persons of repute, all of whom were eye-witnesses of the phenomena. The disturbances—of true *Poltergeist* nature—took place in the household of Andrew Mackie of Ringcroft. As usual in such cases, there were a number of young children in the family, but all were under observation when the major phenomena happened. It is amusing to note that immediately the manifestations became known a rumour was circulated to the effect that Mackie, a mason by trade, 'devoted his first child to the Devil, at his taking of the Mason-word' i.e. upon his admission into the ranks of a society formed by Scottish working masons. The first sign of anything unusual was noticed in February, 1695, when Mackie found that, during

<sup>1</sup> *A New Confutation of Sadducism, Being a true Narrative of the Wonderful Expressions and Actions of a Spirit which infested the House of Andrew Mackie of Ringcroft, in the County of Galloway in Scotland, . . . by Alexander Telfair*, London, 1696.

the night, all his cattle had escaped from their sheds, and that their tethering ropes had been broken. The next night the same thing happened and one of the beasts had been tied to a high beam in the shed, so that it could hardly put its feet to the ground. A few nights later a quantity of peat was brought into the house and ignited, and the smoke nearly suffocated the family. An intensive search failed to reveal the cause of the disturbance. On March 7, 1695, stones were thrown all over the house, and this phase lasted for several days, but no stones were thrown on the Sunday. During the stone-throwing period, when all the family were out, and the children happened to arrive home first, a figure, wrapped in a blanket, was seen sitting by the fire. All the children saw it. The youngest, a boy, seeing that the blanket belonged to him, cried out. The figure suddenly collapsed and left the blanket on the four-legged stool, which, curiously enough, was found upside down. On March 11 a number of pot-hooks and a hanger disappeared from the chimney corner and were found four days afterwards in a 'cockloft'—which had previously been thoroughly searched. On March 21 the parish priest went to the house and prayed for deliverance from the mischievous 'spirit.' While he was praying 'it molested me mightily, threw Stones and divers other things at me, and beat me several times on the Shoulders and Sides with a great Staff, so that those who were present heard the noise of the Blows. That same night it pull'd off the side of a Bed, knock'd upon the Chests and Boards, as people do at a Door. And as I was at Prayer, leaning on the side of a Bed, I felt something thrusting my Arm up, and casting my Eyes thitherward perceived a little white Hand and an Arm, from the Elbow down, but it vanished presently.' During family prayers the spirit repeatedly cried, 'hush! hush!' at the close of every sentence, and the dog, upon hearing the strange voice, would run to the door and bark. At other times during prayer the entity would whistle and groan. Several times it set the house on fire and 'a sheep-house was intirely consumed' by the flames. On April 29 'being Monday, it continued setting fire to the House so frequently, that Andrew Mackie being weary with quenching it, he put out all the Fire about the House, and poured Water on the

Hearth; yet it set the House on fire again several times, tho there was no fire to be had within a quarter of a Mile of the House.' About the middle of the same day 'as Andrew Mackie was threshing in the Barn, it whispered in the Wall, and then cried *Andrew, Andrew*, but he gave no answer to it: Then with an austere angry voice it bid him speak; but he kept silent: Then it said, *Be not troubled, you shall have no more trouble, except some throwing of stones upon the Tuesday to fulfil the Promise.*' The manifestations ceased completely on May 1 and never troubled Ringcroft again.

I reiterate that the chief value of the above report lies in the fact that it has been carefully drawn up and attested by a number of educated persons of repute, and that each manifestation is witnessed separately. This procedure is not common to-day; that such a document should have been published nearly 250 years ago is, I think, remarkable.

#### THE STOCKWELL GHOST

In case the reader should imagine that in the Ringcroft disturbances I have chosen an isolated instance of ancient, serious recording of phenomena, I will briefly refer to the famous Stockwell ghost. In January, 1772, an elderly lady named Mrs. Golding possessed a small house at Stockwell, then a Country district. Wanting a maid, she engaged the services of a young woman named Ann Robinson, aged twenty. She stayed with her exactly ten days, during which period the following manifestations occurred:

On January 6 a number of plates and glasses fell off the dresser in the kitchen. Only the maid was in the room and she ran screaming to her mistress. Mrs. Golding visited the kitchen and saw another row of plates fall off the dresser, when she and the maid were at the other end of the room. At the same time loud noises emanated from various parts of the house; a clock fell off the wall in another room; a lantern was thrown down the stairs; 'an earthen pan of salted beef broke to pieces and the beef fell about'; passers-by, hearing the clatter, rushed to the house and carried Mrs. Golding to a neighbour's cottage, where she promptly fainted.

The phenomena ceased only when Ann Robinson left the house.

A surgeon named Gardner was sent for and he bled Mrs. Golding. Immediately, the blood 'sprung out of the bason upon the floor, and presently after the bason broke to pieces.' Ann Robinson was again present. This sort of thing happened at several houses which the girl visited with her mistress and a detailed account of all the manifestations is given in the report.<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Golding finally got rid of the girl and the phenomena ceased. My object in citing this case is to emphasize the fact that it was properly recorded and signed, and many similar cases to-day are not so well authenticated. At the end of the published report is written: 'The above narrative, is absolutely and strictly true, in witness whereof we have set our hands this 11th day of January, 1772: Mary Golding, John Pain [a farmer, at Brixton-Causeway,] Mary Pain, Richard Fowler, Sarah Fowler, Mary Martin. The original copy of this narrative, signed as above, with the parties own hands, is in the hands of J. Marks, Bookseller, in St. Martin's Lane, to satisfy any person who chuses to apply to him for the inspection of the same.' Camden Pelham suggests<sup>2</sup> that Ann Robinson tricked the investigators. If so, she was not the last alleged medium to do so!

#### MODERN SÉANCE TECHNIQUE INVENTED BY A YOUNG GIRL

We have now seen that 'survival' was discussed nearly four hundred years ago and that the serious recording of phenomena was not unknown in the seventeenth century. The question now arises, when was the typical spiritualist séance technique first practised in England? The spiritualists themselves believe that 'modern spiritualism' began with the Fox sisters in America in 1848, that it spread to England and

<sup>1</sup> *An Authentic, Candid, and Circumstantial Narrative, of the Astonishing Transactions at Stockwell, in the County of Surry. . . . Published with the Consent and Approbation of the Family and other Parties concerned, to Authenticate which, the original copy is signed by them.* London, 1772.

<sup>2</sup> *Chronicles of Crime.* London, 1886, Vol. I, pp. 404-5.



Europe during the following years, and that the Fox girls 'invented' the séance. As a matter of fact, they did nothing of the sort. The séance, as we know it to-day, was invented by a naughty little girl as long ago as 1762. And for this information we have to thank—of all people!—Oliver Goldsmith. In 1762 Goldsmith wrote a brochure<sup>1</sup> on the Cock Lane Ghost, which was then setting London by the ears. This major sensation intrigued many eminent persons, including Samuel Johnson, who was silly enough to visit the 'ghost' in the hope of receiving some 'communication.'

Goldsmith's pamphlet is really a defence of the husband of a Mrs. Fanny Kent who had died in a house in Cock Lane, Smithfield, two years before the disturbances began. The 'ghost' accused Mr. Kent, a previous tenant of the house, of murdering his wife. After a full investigation, it was found that Elizabeth, a young girl of eleven, daughter of a man named Parsons, was the source of the disturbance. Parsons tried to blackmail Kent, who resisted, and, in revenge, the 'ghost' plot was hatched. Parsons was prosecuted and condemned to the pillory. The book is remarkable for the description of a bedroom séance which might have been held in the parlour of a modern medium:

'To have a proper idea of this scene, as it is now carried on, the reader is to conceive a very small room with a bed in the middle, the girl, at the usual hour of going to bed, is undressed, and put in with proper solemnity; the spectators are next introduced, who sit looking at each other, suppressing laughter, and wait in silent expectation for the opening of the scene. As the ghost is a good deal offended at incredulity, the persons present are to conceal theirs, if they have any, as by this concealment they can only hope to gratify their curiosity. For, if they show either before, or when the knocking is begun, a too prying, inquisitive, or ludicrous turn of thinking, the ghost continues usually silent, or, to use the expression of the house, Miss Fanny is angry. The spectators therefore have nothing for it, but to sit quiet and credulous, otherwise they must hear no ghost, which is no small

<sup>1</sup> *The Mystery Revealed: Containing a Series of Transactions and Authentic Testimonials, respecting the supposed Cock-Lane Ghost...* London, 1742 (recte 1762). An excessively rare pamphlet. A copy was sold for £900 at the Kern sale in New York.

disappointment to persons, who have come for no other purpose.

'The girl who knows, by some secret, when the ghost is to appear, sometimes apprizes the assistants of its intended visitation. It first begins to scratch, and then to answer questions, giving two knocks for a negative, and one for an affirmative. By this means it tells whether a watch, when held up, be white, blue, yellow, or black; how many clergymen are in the room, though in this sometimes mistaken; it evidently distinguishes white men from negroes, with several other marks of sagacity; however, it is sometimes mistaken in questions of a private nature, when it deigns to answer them; for instance: the ghost was ignorant where she dined upon Mr. K—'s [her husband's] marriage; how many of her relations were at church upon the same occasion; but particularly, she called her father John instead of Thomas, a mistake indeed a little extraordinary in a ghost; but perhaps she was willing to verify the old proverb, that *it is a wise child that knows its own father*. . . .' And so on.<sup>1</sup>

It seems incredible that the above description of a séance was written 177 years ago. The preparation of the 'medium,' the introduction of the sitters, the 'drying-up' of the manifestations if the sitters were too inquisitive, the assertion that scepticism inhibits phenomena, the 'two knocks for a negative, and one for an affirmative' are *exactly* what take place to-day at a spiritualist séance. Modern spiritualism is supposed to date from the American 'Rochester knockings' of 1848, with the Fox sisters as mediums. I suggest that it dates from the Cock Lane knockings of 1762.

#### THE COMING OF MESMER

At about the same time as the Cock Lane 'manifestations' were exciting this country, a young Austrian medical student named Franz (or Friedrich) Anton Mesmer (1733-1815) claimed to have discovered Animal Magnetism, or what was

<sup>1</sup> For a satirical poem on the Cock Lane ghost, and a good contemporary account of the imposture, see *Poems*, by Charles Churchill, London, 1772, seventh edition.

later termed Mesmerism, Hypnotism, Magnetic Healing, Suggestion, etc. For his doctor's degree, which he took in Vienna in 1766, he chose as his thesis *De Planetarum Influxu*, or the influence of the planets on the human body. He contended that there is a mutual influence between the celestial bodies, the earth and animated bodies; that this 'influence' is disseminated through a fluid which is universal, continuous, and subtle; that the action of this fluid manifests itself in the human body with properties analogous to the magnet—hence the term 'animal magnetism.' Putting his theories into practice, in 1773 he claimed<sup>1</sup> to have cured a woman suffering from, apparently, epilepsy, by applying magnetic plates. He claimed other successes and endeavoured to interest his scientific countrymen in his alleged discoveries. But orthodoxy refused to listen to him and, after futile visits to Berlin and London in search of recognition, he went to Paris, where he established himself in 1778. He was no more successful in France in convincing official science that there was anything in his discovery, but was fortunate in securing the aid of M. d'Eslon, the medical adviser to the Count d'Artois. D'Eslon called a meeting (1780) of the principal medical men, and suggested a scientific investigation of Mesmer's claims. The doctors refused to make such a test. Little did they guess that, within 150 years, hypnotism and suggestion would be employed by half the doctors of Harley Street, and psychophysics would have become a science.

If the Parisian medicos refused to give Mesmer a hearing, their patients did not. The immediate effect of d'Eslon's abortive meeting of the Faculty of Medicine was to publicize the fact that a new practitioner with new methods was curing—or alleged to be curing—all-comers of all diseases, and people flocked to his *clinique*. Mesmer was the sensation of Paris—especially fashionable Paris. The King himself became interested in the new technique, inquired into the nature of some of the cures, and was very impressed. Finally, Louis XVI offered Mesmer a pension of 20,000 livres, and another 10,000 livres a year to equip a suitable establishment in order that he could teach his methods to others.

<sup>1</sup> See his *Mémoire sur la découverte de Magnétisme Animal*, Genève et Paris, 1779.

Mesmer refused these offers, but took pupils of his own, giving lectures on his system. Each student was charged 100 louis for the course. In addition, certain pupils were permitted to open centres for magnetic healing in the provinces, on condition that Mesmer was given half of the fees received.

The phenomenal success of Mesmer and his disciples forced the Government to take some action in the matter. Although the doctors in 1780 had refused voluntarily to examine 'magnetic healing,' in 1784 the Government compelled the Faculty of Medicine and the Royal Society of Medicine to examine Animal Magnetism. Other scientists were added to the Commission, and among them were Benjamin Franklin and Lavoisier. The Commission sat for five months, and, of course, the reader can guess the verdict of the doctors. On August 11, 1784, the Commissioners presented their report. They contended that the cures were probably due to imagination or accident, that the technique was dangerous to the patients, that the existence of the wonderful fluid could not be proved by the senses, and that the whole business should be suppressed by law! However, one doctor, M. de Jussieu of the *Société Royale de Médecine*, was bold enough to state that he was convinced of the *reality* of the cures, experimented himself, and published a monograph<sup>1</sup> on his conclusions.

#### THE FIRST PARLOUR SÉANCES

The typical modern séance is easily traceable from Mesmer's and d'Eslon's sittings with the *baquet*, which was a sort of large circular tub, around the periphery of which protruded a number of iron rods, connected with the interior, which were held by the patients or 'sitters.' Inside the tub were a number of bottles (presumably containing chemicals), 'arranged in a particular manner.'<sup>2</sup> Those taking part stood

<sup>1</sup> *Rapport de l'un des Commissaires chargés par le Roi de l'examen du Magnétisme Animal*, Paris, 1784. For a complete history of the Mesmer controversy, see the Jean François-Gillet collection of tracts on Animal Magnetism in the 'Harry Price Library of Magical Literature' in the University of London.

<sup>2</sup> Compare this technique with the 'Mars machine' described in Price's *Confessions of a Ghost-Hunter*, London, 1936, pp. 118-22.

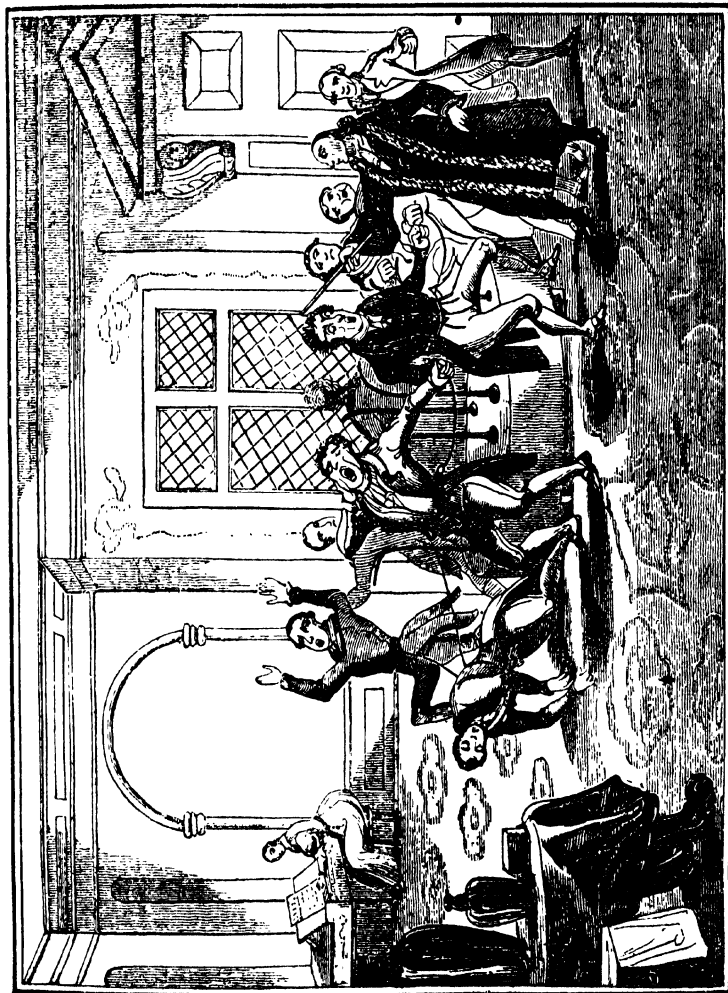
or seated themselves round the *baquet*. Then each sitter was joined to his neighbour by means of a cord, or they held hands in chain formation—exactly as we do at séances to-day. Very soon, the sitters began to get hysterical, screaming, frothing at the mouth, 'with immoderate laughter,' until some of them collapsed on the floor! I have seen the same thing at modern spiritualist séances. During all this commotion the patients were supposed to be receiving the cure for their various ailments, and it is obvious that suggestion played a large part in the proceedings. I am fortunate in being able to show the reader a contemporary drawing of one of d'Eslon's sittings, which, it will be noticed, is complete with music—in the shape of a piano—which is still thought necessary at many modern séances.

#### ORIGIN OF THE TRANCE

In Dr. de Jussieu's monograph<sup>1</sup> on his experiments, he mentions the case of a young man who, after becoming 'magnetized' at the *baquet*, was able to walk about and magnetize other persons by simply touching them. But when he, himself, lost the effects of the *baquet*, he was no longer able to magnetize others, and remembered nothing of what had passed. As Podmore (who cites this case) rightly remarks:<sup>2</sup> 'In this incidental observation—not the less valuable because the observer altogether failed to realize its significance—we have the first indication of the somnambule trance, the master fact alike in Animal Magnetism of the first half of last century and in the Hypnotism of to-day.' If de Jussieu failed to grasp the fact that he had stumbled across a major phenomenon, there were others, more spiritually minded—and perhaps more credulous—who claimed that the somnambule trance was the outward and visible sign of 'possession' by spirits; or, as it is now called, 'spirit control.' It is easy to see how private séances of the Cock Lane type, and the more public sittings organized by Mesmer and his disciples were

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit.

<sup>2</sup> *Modern Spiritualism*, London, 1902, Vol. I, p. 56.



A SÉANCE WITH THE *BAQUET*, TIME OF MESMER

responsible for the technical base on which the structure of modern spiritualism has been erected.

The French Revolution did little to stem the tidal wave of Animal Magnetism which swept France and the entire civilized world and engulfed many eminent medical practitioners.<sup>1</sup> In every country were to be found professional and amateur 'mesmerists,' schools where the technique of Animal Magnetism was taught, countless works and brochures on the subject, and a number of Mesmer societies with high-sounding titles came into being. Charlatans and quacks by the thousand pretended to cure every disease under the sun by means of magnetism, and there were to be purchased 'magnetic beds,' canes, rings, hats, and even underwear—all duly 'magnetized' and guaranteed to cure various ailments.

Though Mesmer had died in 1815, serious French experimenters such as Dr. Alexandre Bertrand and a Dr. P. Foissac persisted in the attempt to obtain from orthodoxy some sort of recognition of his work. Bertrand wrote two classic works<sup>2</sup> in which, while ridiculing such theories as a 'universal fluid,' 'spirit control,' and 'magnetic influence,' he pointed out that the phenomena recorded were really produced by the influence of one mind over another, or what we now call 'suggestion.' At the same time (in 1826), Foissac succeeded in persuading the medical section of the Royal Academy of Medicine in Paris to form another Commission to inquire into the whole question of so-called Animal Magnetism and the undoubted phenomena associated with it. The Commission published its Report in 1831 and it makes very different reading from the one issued in 1784. Parisian medical orthodoxy executed a complete *volte face*. The Commissioners found that the phenomena were genuine; that the somnambulic trance was a fact; and that 'magnetism'—or what we now call hypnotism—had a curative effect. So, at long last, and sixteen years after his death, the claims of Mesmer received the *cachet* of official science, even if his empirical methods were scoffed at. Mesmer had stumbled

<sup>1</sup> Including Dr. John Elliotson (1788-1868), one of the founders of University College Hospital, London, and founder of *The Zoist*.

<sup>2</sup> *Traité du Somnambulisme*, Paris, 1823; *Du Magnétisme Animal en France*, Paris, 1826.

across a most interesting mental phenomenon, invented a fantastic 'explanation' for it, and—quite unprofessionally—exploited it for his own ends.

It would be tedious in this Introduction to follow the history of Animal Magnetism any further. Podmore gives a most detailed history of the subject in *Modern Spiritualism*,<sup>1</sup> and I am indebted to him for some of my data. I have shown how certain people insisted, without the slightest evidence, that the phenomena of hypnotism were really the work of spirits, and they have been doing it ever since. Many séances held to-day differ little from the mental orgies with the *baquet* in Mesmer's *clinique*. The foundations of modern spiritualism were laid on the half-truths of Animal Magnetism, but it required something else to give it the impetus which would enable it to sweep the world as a new religion. Most opportunely—and most appropriately—the new impetus was found in America, in the persons of a young visionary named A. J. Davis, and the two young daughters of a farmer named John D. Fox.

#### THE SEER OF POUGHKEEPSIE

Andrew Jackson Davis (1826–1910) was born at Blooming Grove, Orange County, on the Hudson River, in the State of New York. When he was aged twelve his parents removed to Poughkeepsie and from the name of this township Davis afterwards became known as the 'Poughkeepsie Seer.' When he was seventeen years old it chanced that a lecturer and demonstrator visited Poughkeepsie and gave a series of talks, with experiments, on Animal Magnetism. Young Davis was present at these talks and listened with rapt attention to the account of the wonders of mesmerism and the somnambulic trance. Later, he was 'magnetized' by the local tailor, became a good subject, and began to give trance addresses. At the age of eighteen, as he tells us in his autobiography,<sup>2</sup> he wandered forty miles, became entranced, during which the spirits of Galen and Swedenborg appeared to him in a churchyard and pointed out to him his life work. For the next three

<sup>1</sup> Vol. I, pp. 51–75.

<sup>2</sup> *The Magic Staff*, New York, 1857 (and many later editions).



years he practised magnetic healing with great success, during which period he was delivering trance addresses, subsequently published in book form. These clairvoyant addresses were remarkable in many ways, being dissertations on a vast number of subjects in a rather grandiose style which appealed to those not too well educated.

In 1847 Davis published a long work entitled *The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations*, in which the following curious prophecy appears:

‘It is a truth that spirits commune with one another while one is in the body and the other in the higher spheres—and this, too, when the person in the body is unconscious of the influx, and hence cannot be convinced of the fact, and this truth will ere long present itself in the form of a living demonstration, and the world will hail with delight the ushering in of that era when the interiors of men will be opened, and the spiritual communion will be established such as is now being enjoyed by the inhabitants of Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn.’

Among spiritualists, this passage is regarded as predicting the advent of the spirit-rapping sensation at Hydesville, near Rochester, New York, in the following year, with the Fox sisters as ‘mediums.’ But I agree with Podmore when he says:<sup>1</sup> ‘In the first place, the spiritualism of the years subsequent to 1848 was not a different movement from the spiritualism whose course we have been tracing prior to that year. It was characterized by the same ideas, but found other external manifestations. In the second place, there is no doubt that Davis and the little band who gathered round him helped materially to the fulfilment of this prophecy. It is conceivable that but for them and the movement they represented, the Rochester knockings might have remained as barren of results as the Cock Lane ghost, or any other exploded *Poltergeist*.’ I not only agree with Podmore, but would go further and say that it is *certain* that had it not been for the fact that Davis and his followers had set the stage, the Hydesville manifestations would hardly have been heard of outside Wayne county, in which Hydesville is situated.

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Spiritualism*, London, 1902, Vol. I, p. 169.

## RAPS IN ARCADIA

One night, about twelve months after Davis published his *Revelations*, two young girls, Margaret and Katie Fox, aged fifteen and twelve years respectively,<sup>1</sup> were lying in their bed in a small cottage in the village of Hydesville, Arcadia township, twenty miles from Rochester, New York. The house was a frame building and was so small that the tenants, John D. Fox and his wife, and their two daughters shared the only bedroom, the girls sleeping in one bed, their parents in another. On the evening of March 31, 1848, when the children had retired to rest, and were awaiting the coming of their parents, a series of loud, percussive raps occurred on or near the bed in which the girls were lying. According to the Fox family, as later recorded by them, similar noises had previously been heard in the house. On this particular evening, the raps were so loud that they attracted the attention of the parents, who at once visited the room. The raps continued and, jokingly, one of the girls snapped her fingers, saying: 'Mr. Splitfoot, do as I do!' Answering raps were immediately heard. Several more raps were induced in this way, the 'entity' imitating the signals given by the children. Mr. Fox and his wife decided to call in the neighbours in order that they could witness the miracle.

One of these neighbours, a William Duesler, gives a graphic account<sup>2</sup> of that first séance in the Fox cottage. There were about a dozen people in the little room, the Fox girls were in bed, and their parents were directing operations. Duesler sat on the bed, and asked several questions, to which he received one or more raps—or sometimes no raps if the answer was in the negative. As each rap was heard, Duesler informs us: 'I felt the bedstead jar when the sound was produced.' By this simple method of question and answer, it was 'discovered' that a former tenant of the house had murdered a pedlar for his money, and the name of the alleged murderer was given—by calling out the names of previous

<sup>1</sup> One account gives the ages of the girls as 10 and 7 years.

<sup>2</sup> Recorded in *Explanation and History of the Mysterious Communion with Spirits*, by E. W. Capron and H. D. Barron, Auburn, N.Y., 1850.

tenants, a very loud rap (which shook the bed) announcing the 'culprit.' It was suggested that the spirit of the pedlar was communicating. The reader cannot fail to notice the correspondences between Goldsmith's account of the Cock Lane séance, and Dueslér's story of the one held in the Fox cottage: the bedroom, the little girls in bed, the crowd of curious neighbours round the bed with the parents presiding, the raps on the bedstead, the allegation that a murder had been committed in the house, the victim naming the culprit, and so on. It was spiritualistic history repeating itself, though more than a century separated the two séances.

If the Arcadian séance in 1848 was an exact replica of the one held in Cock Lane in 1762, its effect on the public was very different. The story of the Rochester knockings was the talk for miles around and thousands flocked to the Fox cottage. A married sister of the Fox girls, Mrs. Leah Fish (afterwards Underhill), then living at Rochester, also tried her hand at communicating with the spirits, was successful, and joined forces with the Hydesville rapping mediums. Meetings were held at Rochester and other centres, and the new spirit-rapping movement spread like wild-fire. During the next year or so hundreds of new mediums went into business in competition with the Fox girls.

Of course, there were unbelievers, as there are to-day. Medical men and scientists wanted to see the miracles for themselves, and the Fox girls were frequently challenged to produce the spirit raps under test conditions. Some of these challenges were accepted. In 1851, Professors Austin Flint, Charles A. Lee, and C. B. Coventry, of Buffalo University, formed themselves into a panel and tested the girls. They found that the raps could not be produced when the mediums sat on a sofa and placed the heels of their outstretched legs on soft cushions. But when they were allowed to sit upright on the sofa, with their heels on the hard floor, raps in profusion were heard. In their report<sup>1</sup> they state: 'The conclusion seemed clear that the Rochester knockings emanate from the knee-joint.' Dr. Lee claimed that when he held the knees of one of the girls during the production of the raps, the motion of the bone was plainly felt. Many other persons claimed to

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Podmore, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 184-5.

be able to produce raps with toe- and knee-joint, and a lecturer on pseudo-spiritualism, named Chauncey Burr, toured the country at this period producing raps with his toe-joints at each meeting.

A short time after the Buffalo medical test, Margaret Fox confessed to a Mrs. Norman Culver, a relative by marriage, that the whole affair was a fraud, and demonstrated how the raps were produced—sometimes by cracking the knee-joints, but more often by using the toe-joints. This sworn statement (dated April 17, 1851) was published in the *New York Herald*. Finally, in August 1888, Margaret gave a public demonstration at the New York Academy of Music, when she again confessed that the Rochester knockings were fraudulent and demonstrated on the stage how the raps were produced. Kate Fox made a similar confession. Margaret toured the country demonstrating how she produced the raps, and Mr. John Mulholland tells me that Elmer P. Ransom, her manager and 'lecturer,' is still living. But in the following year Margaret, in an interview, retracted her confession—so, on her own showing, she was either a fraudulent medium, or a great liar. The reader can take his choice. Both the Fox girls secured good husbands, Margaret becoming the wife of Dr. Elisha Kent Kane, the explorer, and Katie marrying Mr. H. D. Jencken, a barrister. Dr. Kane died on February 16, 1857. Both mediums visited England, and met a number of distinguished persons. Sir William Crookes sat with Kate Fox, and was impressed. Kate died in 1892, Margaret in 1895, and Leah, the eldest of the mediumistic sisters, in 1890.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive survey of the activities and lives of the Fox sisters, see: *Explanation and History of the Mysterious Communion with Spirits*, by E. W. Capron and H. D. Barron, Auburn, N.Y., 1850; *Rochester Knockings! Discovery and Explanation of the Source of the Phenomena*. . . Buffalo, 1851; *Modern Spiritualism, its Facts and Fanaticisms*, by E. W. Capron, Boston, 1855; *Biography of Elisha Kent Kane*, by William Elder, Philadelphia, 1858; *The Missing Link in Modern Spiritualism*, by A. Leah Underhill [one of the Fox sisters], New York, 1885; *The Love-Life of Dr. Kane: Containing the Correspondence between Elisha K. Kane and Margaret Fox*, New York, 1866; *The Death-Blow to Spiritualism: Being the True Story of the Fox Sisters* [contains their confessions], by R. B. Davenport, New York, 1888; *The Delusion of Modern Spiritualism and the 'Rochester Knockings': the True Story of the Fox Sisters*, by T. W. Driver, Wellington, New Zealand, 1916; *Fox-Taylor Automatic Writing*, 1869-92, by Sarah E. L. Taylor, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1932. A full summary of the history of the Foxes is given by Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism*, London, 1902, Vol. I, pp. 179-201.

## AFTER HYDESVILLE

One of the most curious phenomena of spiritualism is the fact that the exposures, confessions and retractions of the Fox girls did not strangle the spirit-rapping craze before it was fairly born. Such scandals connected with any other new movement would have killed it stone dead. But by the time the Fox family were thoroughly discredited, forty years had elapsed and during this period tens of thousands of mediums, both professional and amateur, were operating all over the world. By the year 1888, not only had spirit-rapping allied itself with the phenomena of mesmerism and the somnambulic trance, but many novelties in the way of manifestations were being demonstrated: materializations, the abnormal movement of objects (telekinesis), spirit slate-writing, table-turning, spirit photographs, spirit lights, etc. All these phases of spirit activity had been discovered by new mediums at various times, and the novelty of the whole business appealed to those persons, mostly disciples of the 'Poughkeepsie Seer,' who had been waiting for something of the sort to happen.

Another reason why the Fox revelations did little to damage the new movement was because *real phenomena* were being recorded through various mediums. There is not the slightest doubt about this. But real phenomena have been recorded for hundreds of years, as I have endeavoured to prove, and it was merely accidental that the pranks of the Fox girls should have stimulated experimentation and research, especially among scientific men. It is certain that the vast majority of those who were living on spiritualism and selling 'phenomena' at this period were just charlatans and racketeers, and we have many such to-day. But I am convinced that there were some genuine mediums, too. It was the Hydesville fraud which prompted men to inquire into these alleged phenomena. The phenomena themselves had for centuries been crying aloud to be investigated. The time was ripe for such an examination: the Cock Lane fraud occurred a century too soon. And in the case of Cock Lane, the mesmeric trance had not been discovered, and the

mystical writings of A. J. Davis were not there to prepare men's minds for the new revelation.

#### DAWN OF THE SCIENTIFIC ERA

It is a far cry from Hydesville to the Royal Society, but by the time the nineteenth century had drawn to a close, a number of Fellows of this scientific body had experimented with various famous—and infamous—mediums, and many distinguished men had been impressed. For an account of these the reader must consult Podmore's history and contemporary accounts of the mediums themselves. But I will mention briefly a few investigators and some of those whom they investigated.

Daniel Dunglas Home (1833–86), most famous of all mediums, was investigated by such men as Sir William Crookes, Lord Adare, Alfred Russel Wallace, and many others. They were convinced of the genuineness of the phenomena, as I am myself, after reading every work on Home that has been published. I consider Home to be the greatest physical medium of whom we have any record, and he was never exposed. Contemporary with Home were the American conjurers (posing as mediums), the Davenport brothers, Harry Bastian, Anna Eva Fay, Henry Slade, Mrs. W. R. Hayden and many more. Among English mediums I must mention William Eglinton, David Duguid, Mrs. J. B. Mellon, Richard Boursnell, Florrie Cook, Madame d'Espérance, and Cecil Husk. Most of them were caught cheating and exposed. The British investigators of this golden age of psychical research include not only Crookes, Dr. A. R. Wallace and Lord Adare, but also Sir David Brewster, Robert Chambers, William Howitt, Dr. W. B. Carpenter, Sir William Barrett, Dr. John Elliotson, Michael Faraday, Edmund Gurney, Richard Hodgson, Andrew Lang, Ray Lankester, Bulwer Lytton, F. W. H. Myers, Lord Rayleigh, Balfour Stewart, Mrs. A. W. Verrall, Henry Sidgwick (and his wife, *née* Balfour), and a host of others. Among those investigating abroad were William James, Cesare Lombroso, Charles Richet, A. N. Aksakov, Theodor Flournoy, Carl du

Prel, Camille Flammarion, Paul Gibier, Baron Hellenbach, J. C. F. Zöllner, and Professor d'Arsonval.<sup>1</sup>

At least two commissions were formed to inquire into the truth of the alleged amazing happenings said to be occurring at séances everywhere.\* The London Dialectical Society established a committee in 1869, and among those who served on it were Charles Bradlaugh and Alfred Russel Wallace. Its report<sup>2</sup> was published in 1871, and proved to be a triumph for spiritualism. The genuineness of practically all the major phenomena was said to have been established. In 1884 a similar, but more critical, and certainly more scientific commission was appointed in America in accordance with the terms of the will of Henry Seybert, who bequeathed a large sum of money to the University of Pennsylvania for the purpose of an 'impartial investigation of all systems of morals, religion, or philosophy . . . particularly modern spiritualism.' Most of the commissioners were scientists and of considerable academic standing. In 1887 a preliminary *Report*<sup>3</sup> was published which was completely negative. The spiritualists were disappointed. No further report was issued. The real value of both the Dialectical Society's report and the Seybert Commission's inquiry was to focus the attention of scientists on the miracles which were alleged to be happening in their midst. It was at least obvious that there was something to be investigated, and, to this end, Professor William Barrett called a meeting early in 1882, the result of which was the establishing of the Society for Psychical Research. The founding of the S.P.R. was the turning-point in the investigation of the abnormal (the start of the 'classic' period, as someone has called it), as it marked the beginning of organized scientific psychical research. The names of the organizers, and an account of their work, can be found in 'The Men Who Made Psychical Research' (Appendix A).

<sup>1</sup> For concise biographies of these early workers, see the invaluable reference book, *Encyclopædia of Psychic Science*, by Nandor Fodor, London [1934].

<sup>2</sup> *Report on Spiritualism of the Committee of the London Dialectical Society*. . . . London, 1871.

<sup>3</sup> *Preliminary Report of the Commission appointed by the University of Pennsylvania to Investigate Modern Spiritualism*. . . . Philadelphia, 1887. For a scathing criticism of the Report, see: *What I Saw at Cassadaga Lake: A Review of the Seybert Commissioners' Report*, by A. B. Richmond, Boston, Mass., 1888.

## CHAPTER I

### THE PHENOMENA INVESTIGATED

**A**LTHOUGH the technique of spiritualism, as we know it to-day, was invented by Elizabeth Parsons and the Fox sisters, these young people confined themselves to a simple code of raps with which to communicate with the spirit world. But the last knock in the little Arcadian cottage had hardly died away before all sorts of bizarre phenomena were being recorded and demonstrated by various mediums all over America and parts of Europe. Within a few months the Fox girls themselves were giving séances at which musical instruments played of their own accord, articles were levitated, and tables waltzed about the room. This started the table-turning craze, which has not yet died out. Within a few years of the Rochester knockings, Katie Fox was sitting for Charles F. Livermore, a New York banker, and producing materializations. His dead wife, Estelle, and 'Benjamin Franklin' were among the spirits who visited Katie's séances, and they were seen, touched, heard, and even wrote at request. Other mediums were getting spirit messages on slates, spirit voices through trumpets and, a little later, spirit photographs, spirit lights, and spirit paintings. All these phases of physical phenomena have come down to us, though some are no longer fashionable (e.g. slate writing and spirit paintings).

The mental phenomena of spiritualism marched hand-in-hand with the physical: clairvoyance, trance addresses, psychometry, automatic writing, telepathy, clairsaudience, hypnotism, billet-reading, and so on. New manifestations appeared with new mediums, some of whom specialized in one particular miracle, while others produced the whole gamut of the marvellous at their séances. Most of these phenomena have persisted to the present day and before the lay reader can understand what investigators have done and



are doing in separating the very few grains of genuine psychic phenomena produced by good mediums, from the vast mountain of fraudulent chaff supplied by the miracle-mongers, I must describe the phenomena themselves in some detail, with the names of their chief exponents. I should add that for many of the alleged marvels there is no evidence whatever worthy of the name.

#### PHYSICAL PHENOMENA

*Materializations.*—The production of spirits or entities, in the form, likeness, or appearance of human beings, either in whole or part, which are said to be composed of *ectoplasm* or *teleplasm*, an amorphous substance externalized or produced by a medium during a séance and used to build up 'psychic rods,' 'pseudopods' (literally 'false feet'), or other limbs. Those mediums who have become famous for materializations include Florrie Cook, the investigation of whom by Sir William Crookes is a matter of history. Florrie's chief spirit or 'control' was Katie King, the daughter of a pirate, and she was so real that on one occasion Sir William embraced her and kissed her, as he tells us himself.<sup>1</sup> Another famous materializing medium is Eva C[arrière] or 'Marthe Bérard,' examined by Baron von Schrenck-Notzing,<sup>2</sup> Professor Charles Richet,<sup>3</sup> Dr. Gustave Geley,<sup>4</sup> Mme Alexandre-Bisson,<sup>5</sup> Dr. E. J. Dingwall,<sup>6</sup> and others. Willi and Rudi Schneider are also materialization mediums, but both have lost whatever power they once possessed. Carlos Mirabelli, of São Paulo, is alleged to produce a crowd of materialized spirits simultaneously, in full light, but his mediumship has never been tested by a competent scientific group. In 1931

<sup>1</sup> *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism*, by Sir William Crookes, London [1874], p. 104.

<sup>2</sup> *Materialisations-Phänomene*, München, 1914. Eng. trans. *Phenomena of Materialisation*, London, 1920.

<sup>3</sup> *Traité de Métapsychique*, Paris, 1922; *Thirty Years of Psychical Research*, London, 1923.

<sup>4</sup> *From the Unconscious to the Conscious*, London, 1920 (from the French *De l'Inconscient au Conscient*, Paris, 1919).

<sup>5</sup> *Les Phénomènes dits de Matérialisation*, Paris, 1921.

<sup>6</sup> 'Report on a Series of Sittings with Eva C.,' S.P.R. *Proceedings*, London, 1922, Part LXXXIV.

I offered him a fee of £500, and expenses, if he would visit England, but he refused.<sup>1</sup> His 'manager,' Miguel Karl, demanded all expenses for the trip for three persons, and 4,000 French francs per month as a fee. Mr. Karl concluded his letter with the remark that if I would pay this amount 'Mr. Mirabelli will attend very pleasingly to your call!' Another materializing medium was Karl Kraus (or Karl Weber), who deceived Schrenck-Notzing. He was caught cheating by Professor Hans Thirring,<sup>2</sup> and, later, I bought his 'confession'<sup>3</sup> for £10. The most extraordinary materializing medium I ever tested was Mrs. Helen Duncan, whom I exposed in 1931. She 'materialized' yards of cheese-cloth 'spirits,' which I photographed. The 'ghosts' have to be seen to be believed.<sup>4</sup> She was afterwards convicted of fraudulent mediumship in Edinburgh, and fined £10.<sup>5</sup> A woman who emulated Mrs. Duncan is Fru Lára Agustsdóttir, who was brought all the way from Iceland to London by the International Institute for Psychical Research, Ltd., in order to be tested. Six séances were held, but it was the 'unanimous opinion of the Council that the phenomena were produced by fraudulent means.'<sup>6</sup> Her 'spirits' were composed of cheese-cloth, masks, and other odds and ends.

Among the earlier materializing mediums can be mentioned F. W. Monck, 'Mme d'Espérance' (i.e. Elizabeth Hope),<sup>7</sup> Mrs. J. B. Mellon,<sup>8</sup> William Eglinton,<sup>9</sup> and many more. Most of them were exposed. Materializations of animals have been recorded through 'Franek Kluski,'<sup>10</sup> Jean

<sup>1</sup> See *O Medium Mirabelli Mystifica?* São Paulo, 1929 (written by Mirabelli himself); 'The Mediumship of Mirabelli,' by Hans Driesch, *Journal of Am. S.P.R.*, New York, November, 1930.

<sup>2</sup> 'Psychical Research in Vienna,' by Hans Thirring, in the *Journal of the American S.P.R.*, December, 1925.

<sup>3</sup> A résumé was published in the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* for December 25, 1932.

<sup>4</sup> See 'Regurgitation and the Duncan Mediumship,' by Harry Price, London, 1931 (*Bulletin I* of the Nat. Lab. Psychical Research).

<sup>5</sup> For the Duncan trial, see the English and Scots daily Press for May 3-12, 1933.

<sup>6</sup> Members' Advice Card, No. 26, October, 1937.

<sup>7</sup> *Materialization*. (A lecture by Mme. d'Espérance), Rochester, N.Y., 1905.

<sup>8</sup> For an exposure of Mrs. Mellon, see *Spookland!* by T. S. Henry, Sydney, N.S.W. [1894].

<sup>9</sup> For work of Eglinton, see *'Twixt Two Worlds*, by J. S. Farmer, London, 1886.

<sup>10</sup> *Wspomnienia z Seansów z Medjum Frankiem Kluskim*, by Norbert Okołowicz, Warsaw, 1926.

Guzik, the Misses Moore, and others. I detected Guzik in fraud,<sup>1</sup> Kluski has never submitted himself to a scientific panel, and the Misses Moore will not permit me to sit with them.<sup>2</sup>

*Telekinesis*.—That is, the supernormal displacement of objects, though the term is not applied to the levitation or transportation of the medium. Most physical mediums claim to produce telekineses at their sésances, and many *Poltergeist* cases are remarkable for the production of spontaneous telekinetic manifestations, though no medium is present. However, the disturbances are often associated with adolescents. Actually, there is good evidence for the phenomena of telekinesis, though this phase of mediumship is always seized upon by the fraudulent conjurer, posing as a genuine medium, in order to impress the credulous. Fortunately, telekinesis is one of the easiest phenomena to control, as instrumental aid can be utilized. Judged by the evidence, genuine telekinetic movements have been witnessed through, I think, D. D. Home,<sup>3</sup> Stella C.,<sup>4</sup> the Schneider boys,<sup>5</sup> Eusapia Palladino,<sup>6</sup> Stanisława Tomczyk (Mrs. Everard Feilding),<sup>7</sup> Anna Rasmussen,<sup>8</sup> Eleonore Zugun,<sup>9</sup> and—perhaps—Frau Maria Silbert.<sup>10</sup> Other ‘telekinetic’ mediums

<sup>1</sup> ‘Some Impressions of Jean Guzik and his Phenomena,’ by Harry Price, *Journal of the Am. S.P.R.*, February, 1924.

<sup>2</sup> See ‘Animal Spirit Séance Manifestations,’ in the *Sunday Chronicle*, London, November 14, 1926.

<sup>3</sup> *Experiences in Spiritualism with Mr. D. D. Home*, by Viscount Adare, London [1869]; *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism*, by Sir William Crookes, London [1874].

<sup>4</sup> *Stella C.*, by Harry Price, London, 1925.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Convincing Phenomena at Munich’ [Willi Schneider], by Harry Price, in *Psyche*, London, Vol. III, No. 4, April, 1923; *Rudi Schneider*, by Harry Price, London, 1930.

<sup>6</sup> *Eusapia Palladino and her Phenomena*, by Hereward Carrington, London [1910]; *La Questione Della Frode Negli Esperimenti coll’Eusapia Palladino*, by Julien Ochorowicz, Milano, 1896.

<sup>7</sup> *Ueber die Versuche mit dem Medium Stanisława Tomczyk*, by Baron von Schrenck-Notzing, Leipzig, 1922.

<sup>8</sup> ‘Experimental Inquiries into Telekinesis,’ by Chr. Winther, *Journal of Am. S.P.R.*, New York, January-May, 1928.

<sup>9</sup> ‘A Report on the Telekinetic and other Phenomena Witnessed Through Eleonore Zugun,’ by Harry Price, *Proceedings*, Nat. Lab. of Psychical Research, London, 1927, Vol. I, Part 1.

<sup>10</sup> See *Leaves from a Psychist’s Case-Book*, by Harry Price, London, 1933, pp. 187–200.

include Henry Slade,<sup>1</sup> 'Margery' (Mrs. L. R. G. Crandon),<sup>2</sup> Kathleen Goligher,<sup>3</sup> and many more. Sometimes, it has been alleged, instruments and apparatus (such as typewriters) have been operated by 'telekinesis,' but the evidence for these manifestations is bad. Various pieces of apparatus have been devised to prevent the simulation of telekinetic phenomena, including a fraud-proof double cage table by the present writer.<sup>4</sup>

*Apports.*—Objects brought abnormally into the séance room or elsewhere, from the French verb *apporter*, to bring, produce. Like 'spirit' photographs, the evidence for apports is bad. Very few mediums have claimed to produce apports, and many of those who have done so were caught cheating. Some famous apport mediums are Mme d'Espérance (exposed); Heinrich Melzer (exposed: he specialized in flowers and small stones, some of which were found stuck behind his ears by means of sticking-plaster at a séance in 1926);<sup>5</sup> 'Margery,' the American medium; Charles Bailey, an Australian, who 'produced' small live animals and Egyptian and other curios; Frau Anna Rothe, the German *Blumen-medium*, exposed and imprisoned;<sup>6</sup> Mrs. Guppy, the medium who, during a séance, was 'transported' across London; Centurione Scotto, an Italian marquis, who was also 'transported' from a séance room to a hay loft at his home, Millesimo Castle;<sup>7</sup> Thomas Lynn, a miner, and many others. Flowers have always been favourite objects with apport mediums, and one young woman, Hilda Lewis, specialized in various blooms and became known as the 'Flower Medium.' She was exposed, and confessed.<sup>8</sup> A Budapest

<sup>1</sup> See *Preliminary Report*. . . [Seybert Commission] op. cit.; *The Bottom Facts Concerning the Science of Spiritualism*, by J. W. Truesdell, New York, 1883; *Transcendental Physics*, by J. C. F. Zöllner, London, 1880.

<sup>2</sup> 'Margery' the Medium, by J. M. Bird, Boston, Mass. [1925], and the *Journal and Proceedings of the Am. S.P.R.*, New York.

<sup>3</sup> *The Psychic Structures at the Goligher Circle*, by W. J. Crawford, London, 1921; *The Goligher Circle*, by E. E. Fournier D'Albe, London, 1922.

<sup>4</sup> Illustrated in Plate XI, *Leaves from a Psychist's Case-Book*, op. cit.

<sup>5</sup> See *Psychic Science*, April, 1927.

<sup>6</sup> *Der Fall Rothe*, by Erich Bohn, Breslau, 1901; *Geisterschriften und Drohbrieife. Eine wissenschaftliche Untersuchung zum Fall Rothe*, by Erich Bohn and Hans H. Busse, München, 1902.

<sup>7</sup> *Modern Psychic Mysteries*, by Mrs. G. Kelley Hack, London, 1929.

<sup>8</sup> See 'The "Flower Medium's" Confession,' by F. N. C. Bell in *Light*, London, for August 15, 1935.

carpenter, Lajos Pap, like Charles Bailey, concentrates on live animal apports such as beetles, snakes, frogs, etc. He was tested in London in 1936 with entirely unsatisfactory results.<sup>1</sup> The latest claimant to 'apport' honours is Frau Sadler of Breslau, now being investigated by Major G. Huth. I have invited her to London.

*Levitation.*—The abnormal raising of an object or person. The most famous case of a levitating medium is that of D. D. Home, as recorded by Viscount Adare in *Experiences in Spiritualism with Mr. D. D. Home*.<sup>2</sup> This took place on December 13, 1868, at Ashley House, Victoria Street, London. Home is alleged to have floated out of one of the rooms on the third storey, and floated in through the window of another room on the same floor. Those who witnessed the miracle included Viscount Adare (afterwards the Earl of Dunraven) himself, the Master of Lindsay, and Charlie Wynne. This case seems well attested, but is still the subject of controversy. Home is said to have been levitated many times. Other mediums who claimed to have been levitated are Stainton Moses, A Zuccarino, Eusapia Palladino, the famous Mrs. Guppy, Cecil Husk,<sup>3</sup> Frank Herne,<sup>4</sup> Maria Vollhardt, and Carlos Mirabelli. I once visited Vienna in order to test Willi Schneider who, it was stated, had developed 'levitation' mediumship. He was unable to produce the phenomenon.<sup>5</sup> Levitation among saints and ecstasies has been alleged many times with many people. Some accounts are well authenticated.<sup>6</sup>

*Elongation.*—The lengthening of the body or limbs by psychical means. As in the phenomenon of levitation, D. D. Home was the best known exponent, many witnesses testifying to the fact that when this medium was placed against the wall, and someone held his feet, Home would gradually

<sup>1</sup> 'The Lajos Pap Experiments,' by Nandor Fodor, London, 1936. (*Bulletin II*, Inter. Inst. for Psychical Research.)

<sup>2</sup> London [1869].

<sup>3</sup> See *Psychic Force, an Experimental Investigation of certain little-known Phenomena*, by Gambier Bolton, London, 1914.

<sup>4</sup> *Experiences in Spiritualism: a Record of Extraordinary Phenomena*, by Catherine Berry, London, 1876 [Second Edition].

<sup>5</sup> *An Account of Some Further Experiments with Willi Schneider*, by Harry Price, *Journal of the Am. S.P.R.*, August, 1925, pp. 420-45.

<sup>6</sup> *La Lévitation. Contribution historique et critique à l'étude du merveilleux*, by O. Leroy, Paris, 1928.

'grow' until he was several inches taller than his normal height. Viscount Adare records (op. cit.) many such instances. Other mediums have claimed to produce this phenomenon.

*Transportation.*—The miraculous transition of persons, usually mediums, from one place to another. We have seen that D. D. Home was levitated, or rather transported *via* the ether, from one room to another outside a house in Victoria Street. Other mediums, it is alleged, have been transported much longer distances, and the record is held by Mrs. Samuel Guppy, who (in 1871), from her home at Highbury, was instantly precipitated into the middle of a séance at Lamb's Conduit Street, some three miles away. This modern 'transit of Venus' was amusingly illustrated in one of J. N. Maskelyne's books<sup>1</sup> where Mrs. Guppy is pictured sailing over London in her underclothes. I have already mentioned that Centurione Scotto was also transported from his séance-room to his hayloft. I was once foolish enough to bring over from Poland a woman medium<sup>2</sup> at whose séances, it was stated, the *sitters* were sometimes transported. An observer would be in his chair at the séance, when, in an instant, he would find himself, minus his clothes, in the road outside the building. Dr. A. Imich, of Czeszochowa wrote us glowing accounts of this woman's mediumship, and in 1932 we invited them both to London. The medium's name is Frau Dr. Matylda Skrzetuska, and she and Dr. Imich stayed some weeks. We held many séances, but nothing whatsoever happened—not even a rap. Their trip cost us £70. Many other instances of the alleged flight of mediums have been recorded.

*Transfiguration.*—Change of appearance or form by abnormal means, the medium sometimes claiming to be transformed into the physical likeness of a dead person. Many psychics have sat for 'transfiguration phenomena.' Modern examples are those of Madame Eugénie Picquart, a French medium. During my tests she 'changed' into the French actor, Coquelin; then successively into an old French judge, Mephistopheles, an Egyptian mummy, a small boy, etc. In order to produce these effects, she used odds and

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Spiritualism*, London [1876].

ends of paper, chalk, burnt cork, walking-stick, and so on. In my opinion,<sup>1</sup> there was nothing psychic about it. Other 'transfiguration' mediums include Mrs. Bullock, and Miss Lilian Nutter. All the 'transfigurations' I have seen at séances could have been produced by a good facial contortionist.

*Petrifaction or mummification.*—The arresting of the natural process of decomposition by abnormal means. The practice of mummification among the Egyptians was based upon the expectation of a return of the soul to the body, but it is not clear why some mediums profess to be able to 'mummify' organic matter, though some of them do. Joanny Gaillard is the chief exponent of this curious form of 'mediumship', and (as recently as 1928) he claimed to be able to sterilize or petrify fresh fish, fruit, meat, etc., by 'magnetizing' them with his hands. I offered him £50 to mummify a fish in my laboratory. He wanted £100, and negotiations broke down. Later, M. René Sudre, the distinguished French psychist and other scientists tested Gaillard, in Paris, but no abnormality in the medium could be discovered. 'Magnetized' fish, pigeons and chops went bad just as quickly as those that had not been subject to Gaillard's 'influence.'<sup>2</sup> Another medium who claims to mummify is Heinrich Nusslein.<sup>3</sup>

—*Emanations or radiations.*—Just as Gaillard claimed to possess some power which he could exude, and thereby sterilize organic matter, or even cure malignant growths in persons, so other mediums have been tested for similar physical 'rays' or emanations which they were alleged to externalize. From the days of Mesmer persons have been cured by 'magnetic healing,' by making passes with the hands over the affected parts of the sufferer. This is now known to be a mental process (hypnotism). There are many 'healing mediums' to-day, and some cures have been effected, probably by suggestion. Other mediums, it is alleged, have affected photo-

<sup>1</sup> For an account of this medium, with photographs, see *Confessions of a Ghost-Hunter*, op. cit., pp. 101-3.

<sup>2</sup> 'Two Adventures in Metaphysics and Occultism,' by René Sudre, *Journal of the Am. S.P.R.*, Vol. XXIII, No. 3, New York, March, 1929.

<sup>3</sup> 'The Automatic Art of Heinrich Nusslein,' by Harry Price, *Journal of the Am. S.P.R.*, New York, November, 1928.

graphic plates sealed in opaque envelopes. Pasquale Erto is one of these, but our experiments with this man produced no results.<sup>1</sup> Stanislaw Tomczyk was more successful, and Julien Ochorowicz considered that actual rays emanated from her fingers, and that these rays were able to move objects (telekinesis), affect photographic plates, etc. She was investigated by a number of scientists, and details of her phenomena can be found in the works of Schrenck-Notzing, Richet, and others. Many years earlier, Baron Karl von Reichenbach contended that the human body gave off rays or an 'aura' which could be seen under certain conditions. Dr. W. J. Kilner confirmed this and published<sup>2</sup> instructions as to how the aura could be seen. As regards the alleged cerebral emanations said to be externalized by some mediums, Professor F. Cazzamalli has made long and elaborate experiments with a wooden 'isolating chamber,' lined with lead, the whole being earthed. He concluded that 'the human subject, under particular psychic conditions, and notably during the development of telepsychic phenomena, gives off electromagnetic oscillations of the type of radio waves,' which are amplified and received by sensitive radio apparatus.<sup>3</sup> Cazzamalli's technique and conclusions have been much criticized.<sup>4</sup>

*Psychic or 'spirit' lights.*—Lambent or percussive lights associated with mediumship. These are very common at séances with both physical and mental mediums but the good evidence for them is very slight. D. D. Home produced lights on many occasions, recorded by Viscount Adare and others: they were probably genuine. During the séances with Stella C. many lights were produced and they were unquestionably genuine. They were sometimes lambent and sometimes percussive, usually of an 'electric blue' colour (as in a neon tube), but occasionally

<sup>1</sup> *Leaves from a Psychist's Case-Book*, op. cit., pp. 354-76.

<sup>2</sup> *The Human Atmosphere (The Aura)*, by W. J. Kilner, London, 1920; *Photographie des Effluves Humains: Historique, Discussion*, by E. N. Santini, Paris [1898].

<sup>3</sup> 'Telepsychic Phenomena and Cerebral Radiations,' by F. Cazzamalli, *Journal of the Am. S.P.R.*, New York, January, 1926.

<sup>4</sup> By Alexandro Tosi, in *Luce e Ombra*, Rome, November, 1925; 'Observations on the Cazzamalli Experiments,' by J. Malcolm Bird, *Journal of the Am. S.P.R.*, New York, February, 1926.



yellow.<sup>1</sup> Many lights were observed at séances with Stainton Moses ('M.A., Oxon.'), William Eglinton, Franek Kluski, Jean Guzik, and Maria Silbert. Frau Silbert's 'lights' were strongly percussive in their intensity and those I witnessed reminded me of small fireworks being exploded, though other observers state that those they saw were lambent, suspended in the air like small fireballs. Pasquale Erto, the Neapolitan 'rainbow man' produced lights that could not be distinguished from the flashes made by ferro-cerium ('flints' or strike-o-lights used in cigar lighters). Both Dr. Geley and I found traces of ferro-cerium after our respective experiments with this man; and when, by adequate control methods, I made it impossible for Erto to use his hands, all phenomena ceased.<sup>2</sup> Another 'luminous medium' is Anna Monaro of Pirano. Under the strictest test conditions in hospital and elsewhere, scientists found that luminous patches occurred on her body. The mystery of the lights was never solved, though it was thought probable that they were due to pathological causes.<sup>3</sup>

*Psychic breezes or thermal variations.*—Apparent changes of temperature during séances have been noted from the time of the Fox sisters onwards, but I believe I was the first seriously to study and record these phenomena. For this purpose I had made for me (by Negretti & Zambra) a very sensitive recording barograph, sensitive to .01° Fahrenheit. It was found that during experiments with Stella C.<sup>4</sup> and Rudi Schneider, the temperature of the séance-room rose (which was natural) until the trance began, when it began to fall. When phenomena occurred, the graph sometimes showed a variation. These records were not very satisfactory, as it was impossible to control the temperature outside the room, or the body temperature of the sitters. The same positive results in a properly constructed thermal or isolation chamber would be required to make these experiments convincing. 'Psychic breezes' are frequent at

<sup>1</sup> Stella C., by Harry Price, op. cit.

<sup>2</sup> See the *Revue Métapsychique* for May–August, 1924, for Dr. Geley's experiments with Erto; and *Leaves from a Psychist's Case-Book*, op. cit., pp. 354–76.

<sup>3</sup> *Sul Fenomeno di Pirano*, by F. Vitali (and others), Rome, 1934.

<sup>4</sup> 'Some Account of the Thermal Variations as Recorded during the Trance State of the Psychic, Stella C.," by Harry Price, *Journal of the Am. S.P.R.*, November, 1927.



A page of spirits. *Top* : Two girl spirits photographed by Mrs. Deane ; and (*right*) spirit photographs by Mullett of Los Angeles. *Bottom* : Eva 'C. with materialization coming from right ear (Paris, May 8, 1912) ; and (*right*) one of Mrs. Duncan's 'spirit' babies.



Plaster casts of wax spirit 'gloves' deposited at séance with Franek Kluski, of Warsaw.

séances with most physical mediums, but they may be due to physiological causes, rather than physical or psychical. D. D. Home produced 'breezes and winds' (Adare), and the same phenomena have been recorded at sittings with 'Margery.' Some haunted houses feel cold, and at the old Manor, Meopham, Kent, the one from which I broadcast in March, 1936, unaccountable thermal variations are frequently noted. During the broadcast I measured the temperature in the cellar (focus of alleged manifestations) by means of a sensitive transmitting thermograph, and there was a definite sharp rise and fall round about 10 p.m. We could not account for it. The house I am at present (November, 1937) investigating, Borley Rectory, Suffolk, is strangely cold, a fact recorded by many independent observers.

*Spirit photographs.*—As early as 1860 a man named William Mumler was producing heads of 'spirits' on his photographic plates. Some of the 'spirits' proved to be very much alive and he was prosecuted (New York, 1868). Imitators were numerous and the following 'photographic mediums' have appeared: Édouard Buguet (prosecuted and imprisoned, Paris, 1876); Richard Boursnell (exposed); Edward Wyllie (1848–1911, exposed); David Duguid (*d.* 1907, exposed over and over again); William Hope (*d.* 1933, exposed); George H. Moss (exposed and confessed, 1925); Mrs. A. E. Deane (the *Daily Sketch* proved that her 'spirit heads' floating round the Cenotaph belonged to living footballers, 1924); C. and G. R. Falconer (these two brothers were convicted of fraudulent spirit photography in South Africa, 1931; each was fined £150 and costs); and John Myers (against whom a charge of fraud was levelled by Mr. J. B. McIndoe, the President of the Spiritualists' National Union, 1935). There is no evidence, worthy of the name, in favour of 'spirit' photography.<sup>1</sup> I must mention that if a message in writing or a drawing spontaneously appears on a photographic plate, with or without its being exposed in the camera, it is known as a *skotograph* or *psychograph*. The evidence for skotographs is just as good—or bad—as it is for spirit photographs. .

<sup>1</sup> For the fullest account of 'spirit' photographs and how to produce them, with copious notes, see *Confessions of a Ghost-Hunter*, op. cit., Chap. XI.

*Spirit paintings and drawings.*—The abnormal production of pictures or sketches on canvas or paper. The most notorious exponents of this 'psychic' trick (for trick it is) were the Bangs sisters, Lizzie and May, two American women who impressed a number of people who knew nothing about methods of deception. Hereward Carrington detected them in fraud in 1909.<sup>1</sup> Their methods have been published.<sup>2</sup> David Duguid (1832-1907) was another 'medium' who specialized in spirit paintings. A collection of ready-made ones was found down his trousers when he was forcibly searched at Manchester in 1905. He was then aged seventy-three.

*Spirit slate-writing.*—The alleged abnormal or spontaneous production of messages, drawings, etc., on sealed or unsealed plates, said to be the work of spirits. These 'phenomena' are almost on a par with spirit photographs as regards evidence. This phase of mediumship originated in the United States, and most exponents of this trick have been American. 'Dr.' Henry Slade was the greatest slate-writing medium. Spirit messages 'miraculously' appeared on his closed and locked slates, though explanations of his tricks have been published in many books on conjuring. Truesdell thoroughly exposed him<sup>3</sup> and Professor Ray Lankester also unmasked him and prosecuted him (1876). He was convicted of fraud. The sentence was quashed because of a faulty indictment, and before Lankester could apply for a new summons, Slade fled to Germany where he was experimented with by Zöllner,<sup>4</sup> who believed in him. Another well-known slate-writer was Fred P. Evans, of San Francisco. During a séance in 1885 he produced thirty messages, from as many spirits, on a single slate. Some of his 'messages' were in multi-coloured chalks, and chalk portraits of dead people (e.g. D. D. Home) sometimes appeared between his slates, according to his biographer.<sup>5</sup> Another American

<sup>1</sup> *Annals of Psychical Science*, July-September, 1910. See also *Journal*, S.P.R., Vol. X, pp. 5-16.

<sup>2</sup> *Spirit Portrait Mystery: Its Final Solution*, by David P. Abbott, Chicago, 1913. And see *The Bangs Sisters' Manifesto to the World*, [Chicago, 1909].

<sup>3</sup> *Bottom Facts*, op. cit.

<sup>4</sup> *Transcendental Physics*, op. cit.

<sup>5</sup> *Psychography. Marvelous Manifestations of Psychic Power Given through the Mediumship of Fred P. Evans*, by J. J. Owen, San Francisco, 1893.

slate-writing medium was Mrs. Laura A. Pruden of Cincinnati. I had a sitting with this lady in 1925 and was quite unimpressed. Four of us sat round a table, draped to the floor on all sides. Mrs. Pruden held a pair of hinged slates (between which was a piece of pencil) under the table. Soon, one heard scratching, and later, badly written messages were found on the slates. The medium could have produced these writings herself, using one hand and supporting the slate between her knee and the underside of the table.<sup>1</sup> The messages themselves were not evidential. She died on March 10, 1939, aged 86 years.

*Spirit raps*.—Percussive knocks or taps produced on tables, chairs, walls, etc., by means other than normal. These occur at séances, with both mental and physical mediums and some I think, are genuine, though not of spirit origin. I am convinced that I have heard genuine raps with Stella C. in London, Anna Rasmussen in Copenhagen, and with Frau Maria Silbert in Graz. The most famous raps in psychic history are those of Cock Lane and the Fox girls. Of course, all were fraudulently produced, but I think that they merely anticipated the genuine ones, which are of the rarest occurrence. By means of raps, intelligences or entities are said to communicate with the sitters. If raps really occur at séances, then they are of the greatest importance, proving that energy other than normal can be induced and demonstrated. If these raps are real, then I agree with Richet<sup>2</sup> that 'this phenomenon carries the implication of the whole of metaphysics.' Some of the raps heard in haunted houses are probably genuine, though many are caused by the crepitation of shrinking wood, etc. Because the rap phenomenon is such a simple one, it is the one most widely imitated by fraudulent mediums. Many books give instructions for producing raps by mechanical and other means,<sup>3</sup> and self-rapping tables can be purchased. (See Plate VIII.)

<sup>1</sup> See 'The Slate-Writing Mediumship of Mrs. Pruden,' by Harry Price, *Journal of the Am. S.P.R.*, New York, March, 1926. For scores of slate-writing tricks, see *Spirit Slate-Writing and Kindred Phenomena*, by W. F. Robinson ('Chung Ling Soo'), New York and London, 1898.

<sup>2</sup> *Thirty Years of Psychological Research*, London, 1923, p. 445.

<sup>3</sup> *Behind the Scenes With the Mediums*, by David P. Abbott, Chicago, 1907; *Bottom Facts*, by Truesdell (op. cit.); *Revelations of a Spirit Medium*, edited by Price and Dingwall, London, 1922, and many more.

*Table turning.*—The movements of a table at a séance, alleged to be due to spirit energy. Often due to fraud or to the unconscious muscular action of the sitters. Sometimes probably genuine. One of the commonest and earliest of phenomena.

*Direct writing.*—The spontaneous production of 'spirit' writing on paper, slates, etc. There is no good evidence for this phenomenon. (See 'Spirit slate-writing' above.)

*Poltergeist phenomena.*—The commonest manifestations witnessed at haunted houses. *Poltergeist* (from the German verb *poltern*, to rattle and *Geist*, spirit) phenomena are distinguished by their mischievous, senseless, or noisy nature, such as articles being thrown or displaced. Simple 'hauntings' are usually associated with the appearance of phantasms, ghosts, etc.

*Voice or trumpet phenomena, and the independent or direct voice.*—A 'spirit voice' produced through a medium, usually at a dark séance, and with the aid of a cardboard or aluminium trumpet which is seen (if luminous) or heard to float around the circle, delivering messages to the sitters. Although there have been many 'trumpet mediums,' there is no good evidence that a 'direct voice' has ever been heard. On the other hand, many a charlatan with half a crown to spare, and possessing an ability to disguise his voice, has set up as a 'trumpet medium.' The great American spiritualist summer camps (where rascality in 'mediumship' is most rife) are the happy hunting-grounds for the trumpet faker.

Among the trumpet mediums—and their name is legion—may be mentioned F. W. Monck, Mrs. T. Everitt, David Duguid, Etta Wriedt, Mrs. Emily French and Cecil Husk. Among the later mediums are George Valiantine, whose mediumship was lauded<sup>1</sup> by Dennis Bradley, who finally exposed<sup>2</sup> him. I once paid two guineas for a sitting with Valiantine, and the whole séance was just nonsense.<sup>3</sup> Another medium who produces voice phenomena (and most other phenomena as well) is 'Margery' (Mrs. Crandon). At my experiments with her in London, I could not tell the

<sup>1</sup> *Towards the Stars and Wisdom of the Gods*, London, 1924 and 1925 respectively.

<sup>2</sup> . . . *And After*, London, 1931.

<sup>3</sup> *Leaves from a Psychist's Case-Book*, op. cit., pp. 305-15.

difference between 'Margery's' voice on the telephone and that of 'Walter,' her alleged spirit control.<sup>1</sup> Most cases of trumpet phenomena present no difficulty to the experienced investigator, but one woman, a Mrs. Elizabeth Blake of Ohio, puzzled both physicists and conjurers. She 'worked' in daylight, using a very long trumpet which she placed to her ear, the 'voices' apparently coming from the bell end.<sup>2</sup>

#### MENTAL PHENOMENA

*Telepathy, thought-transference, thought-reading, clairvoyance* (i.e. 'clear seeing'), *clairaudience* (i.e. 'clear hearing'), are now known by the generic term *extra-sensory perception*, the sympathetic affection of one mind, person, or entity by another at a distance, through a supposed emotional or spirit influence and without any direct communication by the normal channels of sense.

There are many mediums, both professional and amateur, who claim the ability to discern objects not within reach of the eye under normal conditions, especially in the trance or hypnotic state (*clairvoyance*). Others claim to be able to perceive sounds not within reach of the ear under normal conditions (*clairaudience*).

Experimentation in telepathy and thought-transference received a great impetus when Dr. J. B. Rhine published his monograph *Extra-Sensory Perception in 1934*.<sup>3</sup> For his experiments he used a collection of cards bearing geometrical and other figures, and his subjects or 'percipients' were invited to visualize or guess what the unseen figures were. Nearly 100,000 experiments were made and some remarkable positive results were obtained, the good guesses far exceeding what would be achieved normally by chance. His experiments have been duplicated in England, especially by S. G. Soal, under the auspices of the University of London Council for Psychical Investigation, but the results have been dis-

<sup>1</sup> *Leaves from a Psychist's Case-Book*, op. cit., pp. 275-85.

<sup>2</sup> *History of a Strange Case*, by David P. Abbott, Chicago, 1908. See also *Proceedings of the Am. S.P.R.*, New York, 1913, Vol. VII, pp. 570-788.

<sup>3</sup> At Boston, Mass. An English edition, with the same title, was published in London in 1935.



appointing. Rhine's technique (tightened up in various ways) was followed, but the successful guesses were not more than chance would account for. For many years the Society for Psychical Research has conducted experiments in telepathy and clairvoyance, using such subjects as the Creery sisters, Douglas Blackburn, G. A. Smith, Professor Gilbert Murray, and many others. Few of these cases will bear scientific analysis, and at least one of the subjects confessed to fraud. (See Chapter X.)

*Hypnotism*.—An artificially induced somnambulatory state ('hypnosis') in which the mind becomes passive, acting readily upon suggestion or direction, and upon regaining normal consciousness retaining little or no recollection of the actions or ideas dominant during the hypnotic state. Sometimes this state is self-induced. The phenomena of hypnosis are often ascribed to 'spirits.'

*Psychometry or tactile clairvoyance*.—Said to be possessed by persons capable of divining, by means of physical contact, the properties, character, or associations of a thing with which it has been connected. This phenomenon has been proved, and a striking example is that of Mlle Jeanne Laplace, who, when handling a letter sent to me by Dr. R. J. Tillyard, F.R.S., gave fifty-three impressions, forty of which were correct or reasonably correct. One prediction (twice repeated) was that Tillyard 'would die through a railroad or automobile accident.' The prediction was made in 1928. On January 13, 1937, Tillyard was killed in a motor-car smash near Canberra, where he lived.<sup>1</sup> The case is more fully reported in Chapter IX.

*Billet<sup>2</sup>-reading*.—The abnormal cognizance of the contents of a sealed or unsealed note, by a medium. 'Billet-reading' is usually another name for 'billet-switching' (i.e. changing), and scores of methods of performing this trick can be found in books on *legerdemain*.<sup>3</sup> Bert Reese (1851-1926) was a past master at billet-reading, and impressed many people,

<sup>1</sup> See *Confessions of a Ghost-Hunter*, op. cit., pp. 220-5, for full details of the experiment.

<sup>2</sup> 'Billet,' a written missive; a card or paper conveying a short communication. (*Standard Dictionary*).

<sup>3</sup> In particular, *Fifty Sealed Message Reading Methods*, by Burling Hull, New York [n.d.].

including Schrenck-Notzing and Conan Doyle. 'Harry Houdini' (i.e. Ehrich Weiss) claimed<sup>1</sup> to have detected Reese's methods. Ludwig Kahn (also known by other names), a German clairvoyant, created a sensation in Paris in 1925 by his 'lucidity' in reading sealed messages and convinced a number of distinguished persons that he had the power of 'seeing' inside folded papers, which were placed in such a position that they could not, apparently, be read normally.<sup>2</sup> It is only fair to add that those present (Professor E. Leclainche, Professor Vallée and others) knew nothing whatever of the possibilities of trickery in such experiments. Another American showman-medium who specializes in sealed billet-reading is John Kelly, who gave a public entertainment in London in the autumn of 1937.<sup>3</sup> His methods were indistinguishable from those employed by conjurers when giving a similar demonstration.

It is a relief to turn from rather clever conjuring tricks to the really abnormal cognizance of the contents of a sealed package, a feat accomplished during my attendance at the Second International Congress for Psychical Research (held at Warsaw in August and September, 1923) by the Polish engineer, Stephan Ossowiecki. Dr. E. J. Dingwall, then Research Officer of the (British) S.P.R., also attended the Congress and took with him a sealed package, consisting of coloured opaque envelopes, in which were a message in French, a date, and crude drawings of a bottle and a flag. By merely holding the package, Ossowiecki correctly visualized the flag and the bottle, the colours of the envelopes, and the numerals of the date, though not in the order as written. It was a brilliant success.<sup>4</sup> Because he had himself prepared the drawing, etc., and in order to rule out the possibility of telepathy, Dingwall did not attend the experiment, the result of which was cheered by those present,

<sup>1</sup> See *Houdini and Conan Doyle*, by B. M. L. Ernst and Hereward Carrington, New York, 1932.

<sup>2</sup> 'Un Homme doué de connaissance paranormale: M. Ludwig Kahn' by E. Osty, *Revue Métapsychique*, Paris, March-April, May-June, 1925.

<sup>3</sup> See *Light*, September 23, 1937.

<sup>4</sup> Details of the experiment are given in 'Une sensationnelle expérience de M. Stephan Ossowiecki au Congrès de Varsovie,' by Gustave Geley, in the *Revue Métapsychique*, Paris, September-October, 1923.

Baron Schrenck-Notzing rushing up to the medium and crying '*Merci, merci, au nom de la science!*' Rafael Schermann, the Austrian clairvoyant-graphologist-psychometrist, has emulated Ossowiecki's feats and was the subject of prolonged study by Professor Oskar Fischer<sup>1</sup> of Prague and E. S. Bagger also experimented with him.<sup>2</sup> Dr. W. F. Prince published a critical analysis of Schermann's work.<sup>3</sup> During a visit to Vienna in 1925 I made some simple experiments with Schermann, who rather impressed me. He was very ill at the time and apologized for not doing better.

Before I ceremoniously 'opened' Joanna Southcott's famous 'box,' I submitted it, steel-bound and sealed, to a number of mediums in order to test their 'lucidity' in divining the contents. Nearly every psychic guessed either MSS., writings, documents, drawings or books. Dr. Arthur Lynch, the psychologist, said the box contained 'symbols and vestments.' Miss Stella C. scored a number of hits (during a séance) when she prophesied that the box would contain coins, jewels, a ring, books, beads, a bag, and a seal. All these 'guesses' were proved to be correct when I opened the box at the Church House, Westminster on June 11, 1927, before a large audience. Some of the other mediums did well, too. Guess-work would not, I am sure, account for all of their correct statements concerning Joanna's box.<sup>4</sup>

*Automatism.*—The act of doing something, such as 'automatic' writing, painting, speaking, etc., unconsciously or spontaneously. There can be little doubt that many of these phenomena are genuine, but no doubt whatever but that they are the result of subconscious activity of the mind, and nothing to do with spirits. Many otherwise normal persons are automatists. Sometimes messages from the dead are supposed to be received by the automatic writer, and alleged works by eminent authors and others have been

<sup>1</sup> *Experimente mit Rafael Schermann*, Prague, 1924.

<sup>2</sup> See *Psycho-Graphology: a Study of Rafael Schermann*, London and New York, 1924.

<sup>3</sup> 'Testing Rafael Schermann,' in the *Journal of the Am. S.P.R.*, New York, September, 1924.

<sup>4</sup> For a complete account of the finding, psychometrizing, X-raying, and opening of Joanna's box, see the present writer's articles in the *Journal of the Am. S.P.R.*, Vol. XXI, 1927.

recorded by the same means.<sup>1</sup> The *planchette*, *ouija board*, and similar contrivances merely take the place of the hand in automatic writing. In 1937 a 'lost Schumann concerto' was 'found' by Baron Palmstierna, the Danish Minister, and his friends, using an inverted glass tumbler on a table as a ouija board. They 'communicated' direct with the 'spirits' of Schumann and Joachim.<sup>2</sup> But it was later discovered that the concerto was never lost, that many people knew of its existence, and that it is mentioned in at least two books of reference.

*Precognition, prediction.*—The abnormal knowledge of future events, imparted by trance mediums, clairvoyants, psychometrists, automatic writers and fortune-tellers. Many of their messages are mere nonsense, but in some cases a paranormal knowledge of the future cannot be ruled out. Most of the good predictions have been spontaneous, which is almost invariably the case with psychic phenomena. That is what makes investigation so difficult. Many prophecies were claimed to have been fulfilled during and after the Great War. Even Nostradamus (1503-66) prophesied many of the events of 1914-18, according to some writers.<sup>3</sup>

Miss Stella C. correctly predicted (in 1923) in trance, what advertisement would appear on the front page of the *Daily Mail* thirty-seven days before publication and, as we have seen, Mlle Laplace correctly foretold the exact way in which Dr. R. J. Tillyard would die. During a broadcast talk on precognition in 1934, Dame Edith Lyttelton asked listeners to send her striking personal experiences of fulfilled predictions, dreams, etc. The best of these cases were later published<sup>4</sup> in book form. Some of the results are good, though many are obviously due to coincidence.

*Premonition.*—Literally, a 'previous warning' of something yet to occur; *prevision*, 'prophetic discernment' or mental

<sup>1</sup> For example, see *Psychic Messages from Oscar Wilde*, edited by Hester Travers Smith, London [1924]. For the technique of automatic writing, see *Automatic Writing*, by A. M. Mühl, Dresden, 1930.

<sup>2</sup> *Horizons of Immortality*, by Erik Palmstierna, London, 1937.

<sup>3</sup> See *Die Weissagungen des altfranzösischen Sehers Michael Nostradamus und der jetzige Weltkrieg*, by Albert Kniepf, Hamburg, 1914; *Nostradamus et les Événements de 1914-16*, by A. Demar-Latour, Paris, 1915; *Der Weltkrieg 1914-15 im Lichte der Prophezeiung*, by Reinh. Gerling, Oranienburg-bei-Berlin, 1916.

<sup>4</sup> *Some Cases of Prediction*, London, 1937.

vision of a future event; *presentiment*, a personal foreboding or prophetic apprehension of something in the future.

*Crystal-gazing or scrying*.—Divination by gazing into a white or coloured crystal, bowl of mercury, pool of ink, back of a spoon or other reflecting surface. The crystal, etc., is used merely in order to induce 'lucidity' in the scryer. The pictures 'seen' by the scryer are, of course, subjective. Crystal gazing is of very ancient origin. The best modern scryer is Miss Nell St. John Montague, of South Kensington. To my personal knowledge, she has scored some remarkable successes.

*Dowsing or divining*.—The searching for water, minerals, dead bodies, etc., by means of a hazel twig, piece of whalebone, loop of wire, bobbin on a thread, etc. Of very ancient origin. It is not clear (and the dowzers themselves know little about it) if divining is accomplished by physical or mental means. If the former explanation is correct, it would appear that a ray or electrical or magnetic emanation is induced as a nexus between the hidden water and the dowser; if the latter theory is accepted, then the finding of the water or mineral must be due to some form of clairvoyance. My own experiments with the famous dowzers, Major C. A. Pogson, and his mother-in-law, Mrs. M. E. Pogson have convinced me of the reality of the faculty (possessed by many people) of divining. The water supply at my own home was finally discovered by a dowser from the South Downs, after the orthodox water engineers had failed to find it. In 1930 I accompanied the famous diviner, the Abbé Gabriel Lambert to Hyde Park, where he found a number of hidden springs by means of a bobbin on a thread suspended from his right hand. We afterwards made a map of the hidden water-ways, and its accuracy was later confirmed by the Park authorities.<sup>1</sup> In 1934 Dr. C. E. M. Joad and I conducted an experiment with Captain W. H. Trinder, the well-known dowser, who 'found' a submerged lake merely by suspending his wooden bobbin over an estate map, on which the lake or other water courses (fifty miles away) were

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed account, see my notes in the *Journal of the Am. S.P.R.*, October, 1930. For a general description of his work see *Le Mystère du Sourcier*, by Gabriel Lambert, Paris, 1931.

not marked.<sup>1</sup> The experiment was most carefully planned and Trinder's success rather suggests that in his case, the dowsing faculty is a clairvoyant one, though he denies this. (*The Times*, September 8, 1938.) The late Sir William Barrett was keenly interested in dowsing and devoted much time to a lengthy work<sup>2</sup> on this subject which was published posthumously.

*Hyperæsthesia*.—An exaggerated sensibility or hyperacuity of the normal senses. A condition often witnessed in persons under hypnosis, but the term is also used in describing muscle-reading feats (hyperæsthesia of the sense of touch), etc. 'Stuart Cumberland'<sup>3</sup> (i.e. Charles Garner) was a famous hyperæsthete and muscle-reader, and 'Maloïtz' (i.e. Max Louis Blitz)<sup>4</sup> is another. 'Fred Marion' (i.e. Josef Kraus) is a brilliant hyperæsthete and before the National Laboratory of Psychical Research was taken over by the University of London Council, Mr. S. G. Soal and I arranged a long series of experiments with Marion, and a report on the investigation has recently been published.<sup>5</sup> 'Marion' and 'Maloïtz' (as Cumberland did) earn their living on the vaudeville stage by means of their hyperæsthetic faculty.

*Xenoglossy*.—Speaking in a real language of which the medium has no conscious knowledge. Many cases of supposed xenoglossy have been investigated, but the good evidence for a genuine phenomenon of this type is scanty. Even when fraud was not apparent, it was sometimes later discovered that the medium had come into contact with the strange language (either written or spoken), had forgotten all about it, and that afterwards the subconscious mind had revealed it. A good modern case of alleged xenoglossy is that of George Valiantine, the American medium, who, during experiments with Dr. Whymant, a Chinese scholar, recited a passage from the *Analects* of Confucius.<sup>6</sup>

*Dreams*.—Veridical dreams, real or alleged, are investigated in psychical research, and are amongst the most

<sup>1</sup> For a fuller account, see my letter in *The Times*, September 6, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> *The Divining Rod*, London [1926].

<sup>3</sup> See *A Thought-Reader's Thoughts*, by Stuart Cumberland, London, 1888.

<sup>4</sup> For my experiments with 'Maloïtz,' see my *Confessions*, op. cit., pp. 259-260.

<sup>5</sup> 'Preliminary Studies of a Vaudeville Telepathist,' by S. G. Soal, *Bulletin* III of the University of London Council for Psychical Investigation, 1937.

<sup>6</sup> *Psychic Adventures in New York*, by Neville Whymant, London, 1931.

common phenomena. Many good cases have been examined and in Dame Edith Lyttelton's book<sup>1</sup> are several instances where the dreamers have had their dreams fulfilled. Dreaming of winning race-horses is common. Many cases are on record where artists have finished their pictures, poets their sonnets, and inventors their drawings in dreams or in the somnambule or hypnotic state. Murderers have been unmasked in dreams,<sup>2</sup> treasure has been located during sleep, and, in prophetic dreams, many predictions—afterwards verified—have been made. An important contribution to the study of dreams and dreaming was made in 1927 when J. W. Dunne, an aeronautical engineer, published his *An Experiment with Time*.<sup>3</sup> It is a difficult book to read, but one that should be studied by the serious investigator.

*Spirit healing.*—Healing by mediums alleged to be 'controlled' by the spirits of doctors and others. From the days of Mesmer, claims have been made that certain diseases are curable by magnetic or mediumistic means. In 1789 Mr. de Loutherbourg, an artist, and his wife were performing miraculous cures in London by what we should now call psychic means, if we can believe the contemporary account<sup>4</sup> of their healing mission. During the past fifty years, scores of men and women have set up as healing mediums and have effected some extraordinary cures. Whether these cures (some of which I can vouch for) are the result of 'suggestion' or 'faith,' or are really due to healing spirits is a matter of opinion. But undoubtedly there have been many such cures. 'Spiritual healing' and 'faith healing' hardly fall within the field of psychical research, except that the technique is largely a mental one.<sup>5</sup> Undoubtedly spiritual healing is on the increase, and Milton Abbey, near Blandford, Dorset, the great healing centre, is to be enlarged. The warden, the Rev. John Maillard, has been amazingly successful there. Another noted spiritual healer is the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead, of the City Temple. These healing missions have the approval of

<sup>1</sup> *Some Cases of Prediction*, op. cit.

<sup>2</sup> A classical example is that of 'Maria Marten and the Red Barn': see *Trial of William Corder*, London, 1828.

<sup>3</sup> London, 1927; Third Edn., simplified and enlarged, London, 1934.

<sup>4</sup> *A List of a Few Cures Performed by Mr. and Mrs. De Loutherbourg, of Hammer-smith Terrace, Without Medicine*, by Mary Pratt, London, 1789.

<sup>5</sup> See *Psychological Methods of Healing*, by Dr. William Brown, London, 1938.

the Church of England and are not to be confused with spiritualism.

*Other mental phenomena.*—These include dissociation of personality, split personality, multiple personality, impersonation, cryptomnesia, possession, etc., and belong to the realm of abnormal psychology. Some typical cases will be mentioned in this work. Finally, it should be borne in mind that common to most mental phenomena is the fact of a person acquiring knowledge in an abnormal manner. The knowledge itself is usually of a normal type: it is the *manner* alone of its acquisition that constitutes the abnormal element.



## CHAPTER II

### THE BEGINNINGS OF ORGANIZED RESEARCH: THE STORY OF THE S.P.R.

FOR fifty-seven years the Society for Psychical Research has kept the flag flying for the investigation of alleged abnormal phenomena, though it must be admitted that at times the perishing winds of criticism and hostility threatened to tear it to ribbons. But the storms were weathered and to-day the Society, still undaunted, calmly surveys the psychic scene, as it has done for more than half a century. The Society was not the first organization of its kind to make the attempt at 'establishing' psychical research. This honour belongs to the older Oxford Phasmatological Society, which lasted only a few years. But the S.P.R. was built on more solid foundations and can be regarded as the first real society formed for serious psychical research, in any part of the world.

It was on January 6, 1882, that Professor (afterwards Sir William) W. F. Barrett (then Professor of Physics at the Royal College of Science, Dublin) suggested forming a society for the study of alleged abnormal happenings. He approached several of his friends, including F. W. H. Myers, Edmund Gurney, and Professor Henry Sidgwick. Myers and Gurney said they would support the project if Sidgwick agreed to be President.<sup>1</sup> His consent was obtained, and the Society came into being on the following February 20. The newly-formed S.P.R. attracted to its ranks members of certain small societies (including the Ghost Society, Cambridge, founded in 1851 by the Rev. B. F. Westcott, afterwards Bishop of Durham; the Psychological Society, founded in 1875 by Serjeant Cox; the British National Association of Spiritualists, 1878; and the Phasmatological Society, Oxford, 1875, the most 'scientific' of them all), which were

<sup>1</sup> Myers's statement, *Proc.*, Vol. VIII, p. 598.

investigating 'supernatural' phenomena in a rather sporadic way. The first list of members (published in September, 1882) contains 100 names and on the original Council of the S.P.R. sat W. F. Barrett, E. T. Bennett, W. R. Browne, Alexander Calder, W. H. Coffin, D. G. FitzGerald, Edmund Gurney, C. C. Massey, Rev. W. Stainton Moses, ('M.A., Oxon.'). F. W. H. Myers, F. W. Percival, Frank Podmore, Dr. C. Lockhart Robertson, E. Dawson Rogers, Professor Balfour Stewart, Morell Theobald, Hensleigh Wedgwood, and Dr. G. Wyld. Theobald acted as treasurer and E. T. Bennett was secretary. Henry Sidgwick was President, and one of the Vice-Presidents was Arthur J. Balfour. Some of these men were advanced and avowed spiritualists, and Stainton Moses and Dawson Rogers were the founders (1881) of *Light*, the still popular spiritualist weekly. Mrs. Henry Sidgwick was another original member, but her name did not appear in the lists until January, 1884, because, as she tells<sup>1</sup> us, holding a responsible position at Newnham College, 'it was probably not thought desirable to risk associating the College in the public mind with what was likely to be regarded as a cranky Society.' Psychical research is now, of course, 'respectable.' William Crookes, A. P. Sinnett, Alfred Russel Wallace and other well-known men joined the Society soon after its formation.

#### DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

When the S.P.R. was formed, it was understood that the Council should be composed of both spiritualists and non-spiritualists, and that the aim of the Society should be to approach the problems presented by alleged phenomena scientifically and without prejudice or prepossession of any kind. To this end, it was agreed that the Society should have for its objects:

An examination of the nature and extent of any influence which may be exerted by one mind upon another, apart from the normal sensory organs; the study of hypnotism, mesmerism, clairvoyance and allied phenomena; the investi-

<sup>1</sup> *Proc.*, Vol. XLI, p. 6.

gation into Reichenbach's alleged discoveries of the so-called 'odic force'; inquiry into apparitions and haunted houses; investigation of the physical phenomena of spiritualism; the formation of a library relating to psychic subjects generally, etc.

It was emphasized that 'Membership of the Society does not imply the acceptance of any particular explanation of the phenomena investigated, nor any belief as to the operation, in the Physical world, of forces other than those recognized by Physical Science.'<sup>1</sup> Members are of two classes: full members and associates, the latter paying half fees.<sup>2</sup> The work of the Society is published in its *Proceedings* (1882) and *Journal* (1884) the latter being for 'private circulation only.' This rule effectively prevents anyone from analysing, in print, the finances of the Society, the many controversial matters which are thrashed out, and details of the rather piquant squabbles which fill its pages from time to time. In the present writer's opinion, much of the most interesting information connected with the Society is published in its *Journal*.

#### PRESIDENTS, 1882-1939

A glance at the list of Presidents since the founding of the Society reveals the names of many persons distinguished in various fields of activity, though some of them have made no serious contribution to psychical research. Naturally, the Sidgwicks and their relatives are well represented. A strange omission from the list is Sir E. N. Bennett, M.P. for Central Cardiff, and Assistant Postmaster-General (1932-5). Sir Ernest joined the S.P.R. in its early years and has done much more, both for the Society and psychical research generally, than many of its Presidents, a list of whom follows:

Henry Sidgwick (1882-4), Balfour Stewart (1885-7), Henry Sidgwick (1888-92), Lord Balfour (1893), William James (1894-5), Sir William Crookes (1896-9), F. W. H. Myers (1900), Sir Oliver Lodge (1901-3), Sir William

<sup>1</sup> Extract from *Constitution*.

<sup>2</sup> Associate membership has now been suspended, except in the case of Student Associates.

Barrett (1904), Charles Richet (1905), Gerald W. Balfour (1906-7), Mrs. Henry Sidgwick (1908-9), H. A. Smith (1910), Andrew Lang (1911), Bishop Boyd Carpenter (1912), Henri Bergson (1913), F. C. S. Schiller (1914), Gilbert Murray (1915-16), L. P. Jacks (1917-18), Lord Rayleigh (1919), W. McDougall (1920-1), T. W. Mitchell (1922), Camille Flammarion (1923), J. G. Piddington (1924-5), Hans Driesch (1926-7), Sir L. J. Jones (1928-9), W. F. Prince (1930-1), Mrs. Henry Sidgwick and Sir Oliver Lodge (1932), Mrs. A. Lyttelton (1933-4), C. D. Broad (1935-6), Lord Rayleigh (1937-8), H. H. Price (1939).

An analysis of the above list reveals that during fifty-seven years, only six foreigners were elected to the Presidential chair; that the founder of the Society (Sir William Barrett) occupied it for one year only; and that the Sidgwicks and their relatives occupied it for nineteen years.

#### DISSENSIONS

I have stated that both scientists and spiritualists were on the first Council, and it was hoped that they would agree. But it was like trying to mix oil and water. The experiment has been tried more than once, and has usually failed. In 1886 Stainton Moses, the medium, objected to certain comments on Eglinton's phenomena which appeared in the *Proceedings*, and resigned his membership. He was not only on the Council but was also a Vice-President. For the same reasons that Doyle and Bradley resigned from the S.P.R. nearly fifty years later, Moses left the Society because he did not consider that spiritualism was getting a square deal. In his letter of resignation he stated: 'I have conceived that as a representative Spiritualist I could not do otherwise considering, as I do, that the evidence for phenomena of the genuine character of which I and many others have satisfied ourselves beyond doubt, is not being properly entertained or fairly treated by the S.P.R.' Some of his spiritualist friends also resigned.

The uproar caused by the S.P.R.'s attitude towards William Eglinton (who *may* have produced genuine pheno-

mena; he certainly cheated on many occasions) had repercussions in various ways. Of course, the spiritualists were furious. Their fury was intensified by the fact that an amateur conjurer, S. J. Davey, posing as a medium, duplicated many of Eglinton's phenomena, afterwards revealing the fact that he staged the mock séances in order to test the sitters' powers of observation. Davey deceived nearly everyone who sat with him and his slate-writing, 'materializing,' and other tricks were performed very cleverly. Dr. Hodgson has left us full accounts of the experiments and the way the tricks were done.<sup>1</sup> Davey's tricks were so clever that a scientist of A. R. Wallace's calibre insisted that he was, in reality a medium posing as a conjurer.<sup>2</sup>

It is inevitable that in a society like the S.P.R., investigating a subject as controversial, difficult, and elusive as psychical research, there must sometimes be violent differences of opinion between members and the executive. Consequently, there have been many resignations because members did not always see eye to eye with those who were responsible for the conduct of the Society. People join the S.P.R. for a variety of reasons. Some are convinced spiritualists and hope to have their convictions endorsed by the more scientific methods of the Society. When they find that this is not the case, they resign—sometimes rather violently! They forget that the S.P.R. does not deliver *ex cathedra* opinions, but tries to stimulate investigation. Some of the criticisms have, I think, been deserved. Certain of the officers of the S.P.R. had an unhappy way of dealing with members, some of whom found a lack of warmth when visiting its rooms. The Society has been accused of being a 'family affair,' and of various other alleged sins. Even Council members have complained to me of the way they have been treated. The late Sir William Barrett once wrote me that he was 'treated like a child' at the Council meetings, and that 'Mrs. Sidgwick always gets her own way'—which I could quite believe. The feminine element was always a factor at the S.P.R., as in most psychic societies. In a letter

<sup>1</sup> *Proc.*, Vols. IV and VIII. Also 'Experimental Investigation,' by S. J. Davey, *Proc.*, Vol. IV., p. 405.

<sup>2</sup> See *Proc.*, Vol. VIII, pp. 253-5, 308-9.

dated November 3, 1930, Professor Schiller wrote me in the same strain, remarking that 'members are resigning in large numbers,' on account of the circumstances under which Sir Arthur Conan Doyle left the Society.

#### THE CONAN DOYLE UPROAR

In January, 1930, a few months before his death, Sir A. Conan Doyle addressed a letter to the 'Chairman of the Council of the S.P.R.,' resigning his membership, at the same time as he sent a printed copy of it to every member. The trouble arose through the slating of a certain book by an employee of the S.P.R. in the pages of its *Journal*. In his letter Sir Arthur said that the hostile review was a series of misrepresentations and insulting innuendoes that tended to lower the good name of the Society. He concluded his letter by saying: 'My only resource is, after thirty-six years of patience, to resign my own membership, and to make some sort of public protest against the essentially unscientific and biassed work of a society which has for a whole generation produced no constructive work of any kind, but has confined its energies to the misrepresentation and hindrance of those who have really worked at the most important problem ever presented to mankind.' He invited other members to follow his example.

I must admit that my sympathies were entirely with the S.P.R. The book in question deserved all that was said about it. I reviewed the book<sup>1</sup> for an American monthly and said something similar to what appeared in the S.P.R. *Journal*, but in more polite language. *The Times Literary Supplement*,<sup>2</sup> in referring to the book, remarked that 'it can hardly excite surprise that in the *Journal* of the S.P.R. . . . the account was savagely criticized.' The book in question tells of séances held in an Italian castle, during which 'apparitions' were brought into the room through locked doors and finally the owner himself (an Italian nobleman) was 'transported' through six locked doors, being found two

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Psychic Mysteries*, by Mrs. G. K. Hack, London, 1930.

<sup>2</sup> March 20, 1930.     ●

hours later in some stables in a deep trance. Sir A. C. Doyle believed all this.

The Doyle resignation was rather in the nature of a test as to whether members approved of the way in which the Society was managed. There were resignations. In 1920, there were 1,305 members and associates; in 1931, the number had fallen to 954. In 1932, the number was 809. The latest figures, just published, show a grand total of 699 members<sup>1</sup> and associates. Excluding subscribing libraries, the number is 636.

#### BRADLEY INDICTS THE S.P.R.

The split between the spiritualists and the psychical researchers caused by the resignation of Doyle in 1930 was intensified by the resignation of Mr. Dennis Bradley in 1931. Bradley was not content to write a letter about his alleged grievances, but compiled a whole book<sup>2</sup> about them, a copy of which he sent to every member. He says: 'After nearly fifty years of research . . . the present coterie of administrators dispute, deride, and cast contumely upon all phenomena that are brought before their notice. Individual members who, at considerable expense and sacrifice of time, have devoted many years to genuine research work, are grossly insulted by ignorant criticisms and dastardly insinuations.' There is a good deal more in the same strain.

As in Doyle's case, my sympathies were again with the S.P.R. Bradley, like Doyle, championed the spiritualists and a good deal of his 'indictment' concerned the Society and George Valiantine, Bradley's voice medium. The same year, Bradley himself exposed him!<sup>3</sup> The S.P.R. moved much too slowly for Bradley's impulsive temper and spiritistic beliefs. I doubt whether his brochure had much effect on the Society: Doyle's resignation caused an upheaval, and at one period I believe the Society was in danger of extinction.

<sup>1</sup> The total membership, February 1939, was 688 (*Journal*, S.P.R., Feb., 1939).

<sup>2</sup> *An Indictment of the Present Administration of the Society for Psychical Research*, London [1931].

<sup>3</sup> . . . *And After*, London, 1931.

## WHAT THE S.P.R. HAS DONE

The Society has, in its time, done some valuable work. The best of it belongs to the past, during the classic days of Myers, Gurney, Barrett, Hodgson, Podmore, and the other 'giants' of the period. Its *Proceedings* and *Journal* are full of important papers on clairvoyance, book tests, telepathy, cross-correspondences, *Poltergeists*, premonitions, hauntings, trance mediumship, apparitions, dowsing, etc. A good deal of it makes rather dreary reading, and to appreciate some of the papers, one has to be a mathematician. The Society has specialized, so to speak, in the mental phenomena rather than in the physical for the simple reason that there were more mental mediums. In any case, physical phenomena have never attracted most of the officers of the Society, at any period.

For a classified list of the principal cases, papers, and experiments of the S.P.R., the reader should consult the 'Jubilee' volume of *Proceedings*.<sup>1</sup> It is complete to June, 1932. Both Dr. Hereward Carrington<sup>2</sup> and Dr. Nandor Fodor<sup>3</sup> have published the main contents of the *Proceedings* in a convenient form. The activities of the Society have been very diverse and I will now summarize the most important of them.

For the first few years of the Society's life, telepathy and allied phenomena (now known as 'extra-sensory perception') occupied the attention of the S.P.R., just as it does to-day, judging by recent *Proceedings*. In 1883 Gurney, Myers and Podmore began the gigantic task of compiling their *Phantasms of the Living*, and it was not until 1886 that the book was published. The work of the Society at this period can be judged by the fact that in one year (1883) it is computed that 10,000 letters were sent out by its officers. Another classic work was F. W. H. Myers's *Human Personality*, a book dealing with automatism, phantasms of the dead, trance, etc. It was published by Longmans,<sup>4</sup> and was, in

<sup>1</sup> Vol. XLI, 1932-3, pp. 27-59.

<sup>2</sup> *The Story of Psychic Science*, London, 1930, pp. 370-87.

<sup>3</sup> *Encyclopædia*, op. cit., pp. 302-9.

<sup>4</sup> *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, London, 1903.



part, a reprint of various papers which had appeared in the Society's *Proceedings*.

#### EXPOSURE OF THEOSOPHICAL 'MIRACLES'

In 1884 the Society deputed Dr. Richard Hodgson to inquire into the so-called miracles which the Theosophists were claiming on behalf of some of their devotees. The alleged phenomena differed little from those of the spiritualist séance rooms: apparitions, telekinetic movements, and—especially—the miraculous appearance of written messages from the Mahatma 'Koot Hoomi' and others. To complete his inquiries Hodgson journeyed to India, where he stayed three months. He found that the 'miracles' were mere tricks, and interviewed some of Madame Blavatsky's confederates. These included Madame E. Coulomb, who wrote a full account<sup>1</sup> of her part in the frauds. Hodgson's report was published as Volume III of the Society's *Proceedings*. It is a voluminous document, with many facsimiles of letters, etc. The report caused a major sensation and the controversy which centred around it is still raging.

#### THE AMERICAN BRANCH

In 1885 an American S.P.R. was opened in Boston, due largely to the initiative of Sir William Barrett, who had lectured in the States and Canada in 1884. In 1887 the Boston Society became a branch of the British S.P.R., with Hodgson as secretary, and William James as guide, philosopher, and friend. When Hodgson died (1905) it again became independent, with Professor James Hervey Hyslop (1854-1920) as its leading spirit. It was during the early years of the American S.P.R. that Hodgson, Hyslop, and William James became interested in the famous Boston trance medium, Mrs. L. E. Piper. It was through this

<sup>1</sup> *Some Account of my Interchange with Madame Blavatsky . . . and a Full Explanation of the Most Marvellous Theosophical Phenomena*, Madras, 1884 (and London, 1885).

remarkable woman that Dr. Hodgson, Professor Hyslop and Sir Oliver Lodge became convinced of 'survival,' and the spirits of Hodgson, Myers, Gurney, and many other students of psychical research are alleged to have 'communicated' through her.<sup>1</sup>

#### CENSUS OF HALLUCINATIONS

Edmund Gurney (1847-88) had been slowly building up a list of those who declared that they had seen a vision or apparition which they recognized. More than five thousand persons answered his questionnaire. His death in July, 1888, was a great shock to psychical research and especially to the S.P.R., as the Society lost its editor and honorary secretary at one blow. His 'census' was then incomplete, and, in 1889, the Society decided to start another *Census of Hallucinations*, under the direction of Professor Sidgwick and a committee, on a more ambitious scale. About four hundred collectors were appointed and some 17,030 answers were received. The collecting, analysis, and collating of these answers took five years, and the report<sup>2</sup> appeared in 1894. Of those who answered, 2,272 persons declared that they had seen an apparition. In preparing the report, great care was taken in ruling out all cases of 'hallucination' thought due to pathological causes.

#### AUTOMATIC WRITING AND CROSS-CORRESPONDENCE

The death of F. W. H. Myers (1843-1901) was another blow to the S.P.R. These great pioneers of scientific psychical research were gradually disappearing, and their places were not being taken by men of the same calibre. Soon after Myers's death, his friend Mrs. A. W. Verrall (1859-1918), lecturer in classics at Newnham College, discovered she had the power of automatic writing. A number of her friends

<sup>1</sup> For accounts of Mrs. Piper's mediumship, see *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. VI, Part 17, and later vols.; *Mrs. Piper and the Society for Psychical Research*, by M. Sage, New York, 1904; *The Life and Work of Mrs. Piper*, by Alta L. Piper, London, 1929.

<sup>2</sup> *Proc.*, Vol. X, Part 26.

and others, and her daughter (now Mrs. W. H. Salter), also declared they possessed a similar faculty and their various 'scripts' were compared. It was found that, although some of the automatists were strangers to one another, and had never met or communicated, their scripts contained references to the same subject or subjects, either directly or indirectly. The term 'cross-correspondence' was coined. This method is alleged to have been suggested by the spirit of Myers, as one of the principal 'communicators,' and 'Gurney' is said to be another. Records of the cross-correspondence scripts are interesting and important, and suggest a nexus of some sort between the living and the dead. A famous example of cross-correspondence is that of the 'Ear of Dionysius,'<sup>1</sup> but there are many papers on the subject, and automatism generally, scattered throughout the later volumes of the S.P.R. *Proceedings*.<sup>2</sup>

Book-tests (in which a medium, in trance, gives references—more or less cryptic—to a certain subject which is to be found on a given page in a particular book in a place unknown to the psychic) also occupied the attention of various members from time to time, but I do not consider the evidence very satisfactory. The present writer once conducted experiments in 'book-tests' with non-mediums, and chance accounted for as many 'successes' as are recorded with some mediums. It is often a matter of skilful 'interpretation.'

#### TELEPATHY VIA THE ETHER

The only other experiments in the realm of mental phenomena which need detain us here is the telepathic test which was made over the radio on February 16, 1927. In 1924 I approached the old British Broadcasting Company with details of a series of telepathic experiments in which listeners could join. The B.B.C. was sympathetic, but after a long correspondence concluded that 'We have to avoid doing anything which will justifiably expose us to an attack by the

<sup>1</sup> 'The Ear of Dionysius: Further Scripts Affording Evidence of Personal Survival,' by the Right Hon. G. W. Balfour, *Proc.*, Vol. XXIX, 1918, Part 73.

<sup>2</sup> Especially Vols. XX-XXXVIII.

medical profession and other students of the mental and nervous systems.' However, three years later, similar experiments *were* broadcast, Sir Oliver Lodge acting as announcer. The number of listeners who sent in their impressions was 24,659, but, on analysis, the experiments had to be regarded as negative.<sup>1</sup> They are detailed in Chapter XV.

#### PHYSICAL PHENOMENA

As I have intimated, physical mediums have always played a minor part in the activities of the S.P.R. I have already referred to the dissensions caused by the Society's attitude to Eglinton and Valiantine. Certain other physical mediums were investigated by the S.P.R., and the following were the principal subjects:

*Charles Bailey*.—Bailey was an apport medium, and I have made some mention of him in the last chapter ('The Phenomena Investigated'). He was detected in fraud and exposed.<sup>2</sup>

*Eusapia Palladino*.—A famous Neapolitan peasant woman who was—at rare intervals—unquestionably genuine. But she often cheated. She impressed Sir Oliver Lodge. In 1895, Myers investigated Eusapia and reported that all the phenomena were spurious. In 1908 the S.P.R. sent a Commission (the Hon. Everard Feilding, Hereward Carrington, and W. W. Baggally; the last two were amateur conjurers) to Naples. They witnessed undoubted genuine phenomena and wrote a lengthy report<sup>3</sup> on their visit. Everard Feilding was, I think, the greatest sceptic regarding psychic phenomena I have ever met. But a few years before his death he wrote me to the effect that just as Rudi Schneider (in 1929–30) convinced me of physical phenomena, so Eusapia had convinced him.

'*Eva C.*' (i.e. Marthe Béraud).—French materializing medium. Studied successively by Professor Richet, Madame

<sup>1</sup> See 'The Broadcasting Experiment in Mass Telepathy,' by V. J. Woolley, *Proc.*, Vol. XXXVIII, 1928–9, Part 105.

<sup>2</sup> See *Journal*, Vol. XV, pp. 194–208. ('Report on Sitzings with Charles Bailey, the Australian Apport Medium.').

<sup>3</sup> *Proc.*, Vol. XXIII, 1909, Part 59.

Bisson (who adopted her), Schrenck-Notzing and Gustave Geley. In 1920 Eva C. and Madame Bisson visited London and gave forty sittings to the S.P.R. Most of these were negative, and the small amount of 'materialized' substance which appeared gave rise to the 'regurgitation' theory.<sup>1</sup>

*The Price-Hope Case.*—In 1922 I completely exposed William Hope, the 'spirit' photographer and my report appeared in the S.P.R. *Journal*.<sup>2</sup>

*Willi Schneider.*—One of the famous Schneider boys, brother of Rudi. In May, 1922, I accompanied Dr. E. J. Dingwall (then research officer to the S.P.R.) to Munich, at the invitation of Schrenck-Notzing, to witness the phenomena of his latest *protégé*. We were impressed with what we saw and said so.<sup>3</sup> In view of our reports, Willi was invited to London in 1924 and gave twelve sittings under the auspices of the S.P.R. We saw nothing in London comparable with what we witnessed at Munich, but it was admitted<sup>4</sup> that genuine telekinetic phenomena, under perfect conditions, were apparently produced by Willi.

*Janusz Fronczek.*—Polish physical medium, producing 'psychic lights,' etc. Investigated by Dingwall and Woolley, but manifestations declared normal.<sup>5</sup>

*'Margery.'*—At the end of 1924 Dingwall went to Boston, Mass., as the representative of the Society, in order to investigate the claims of Mrs. L. R. G. Crandon ('Margery'). His subsequent report was negative.<sup>6</sup> Later (in December, 1929) the Crandons gave some séances in the S.P.R. rooms, but convinced no one. Dr. Woolley (who acted as observer for the Society) fully reported the sittings.<sup>7</sup>

*Rudi Schneider.*—Brother of Willi Schneider, and also a famous Austrian medium. Following my adverse report<sup>8</sup> on Rudi (1932 experiments) the S.P.R. decided to test him.

<sup>1</sup> 'Report on a Series of Sittings with Eva C.' by E. J. Dingwall, *Proc.*, Vol. XXXII, 1922, Part 84.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. XX, May, 1922, pp. 271 ff.

<sup>3</sup> See 'Convincing Phenomena at Munich,' by Harry Price, *Psyche*, April 1923.

<sup>4</sup> *Proc.*, Vol. XXXVI, 1926-8, Part 97.

<sup>5</sup> *Proc.*, Vol. XXXVI, 1926-8, Part 97.

<sup>6</sup> *Proc.*, Vol. XXXVI, 1926-8, Part 98.

<sup>7</sup> 'The Margery Mediumship,' *Proc.*, Vol. XXXIX, pp. 358-68.

<sup>8</sup> 'An Account of Some Further Experiments with Rudi Schneider,' Nat. Lab. of Psychical Research, *Bulletin* IV, 1933.

From October, 1933, to March, 1934, fifty-five sittings were held—all entirely negative.<sup>1</sup>

Of course, many more physical mediums than those mentioned above have been tested by members of the S.P.R. in their private capacity, and short reports have appeared in the Society's publications. Also, accounts have appeared concerning notorious physical mediums, notably F. G. F. Craddock, Charles Eldred (who made a wonderful mechanical chair, containing masks, cheese cloth, etc. [see Plate V]), Francesco Carancini, and many others. Of the various Research Officers who conducted experiments for the S.P.R., only two need be mentioned: Dr. E. J. Dingwall, who held the position from 1922 to 1927, and Dr. V. J. Woolley, who resigned from the S.P.R. in 1932 on account of friction with certain of the officers. Both are excellent observers, and Dingwall knows more about the methods of deception as employed by dishonest mediums than any officer ever appointed by the Society.

#### THE 'SCANDAL' PERSISTS

At the first General Meeting of the S.P.R., held at Willis's Rooms, London, on July 17, 1882, the President, Professor Henry Sidgwick, in his Presidential Address, said these words: 'The present state of things is a scandal to the enlightened age in which we live. That the dispute as to the reality of these marvellous phenomena—of which it is quite impossible to exaggerate the scientific importance. . . . I say it is a scandal that the dispute as to the reality of these phenomena should still be going on. . . . Now the primary aim of our Society, the thing which we all unite to promote, whether as believers or non-believers, is to make a sustained and systematic attempt to remove this scandal in one way or another. . . . The matter is far too important to be left where it now is. . . .'<sup>2</sup> These words were spoken fifty-seven years ago and the 'scandal' still exists. The Society has reached no conclusions after all these years and after issuing

<sup>1</sup> See *Proc.*, Vol. XLII, Part 137, October, 1934.

<sup>2</sup> *Proc.*, Vol. I, p. 8.

scores of volumes of publications. The questions of telepathy, clairvoyance, trance, dreams, etc., and the various phases of physical phenomena are still unsettled so far as the S.P.R., in its official capacity, is concerned. Of course, some of its Council, and many of its members, are convinced of survival, and of the genuineness of some of the phenomena of the séance room. But in view of Professor Sidgwick's remarks (which amounted almost to a promise), which he emphasized, it is a little strange that no 'pronouncement' by the Council has been made at any time.

It is also strange that during fifty-seven years no official attempt has been made to convince scientific orthodoxy. With the substantial income which the S.P.R. has enjoyed for many years, and in view of its many scientific contacts, it is remarkable that no attempt has been made to establish a chair or a fellowship of psychical research at one of the universities. Does the Society consider that the *real* evidence is not yet sufficient to put before Science? Is it afraid that an official university Department would affect its own status? There must be *some* reason for the inactivity and delay in compelling orthodoxy to remove the 'scandal' of which Professor Sidgwick spoke such a long time ago. It cannot be a question of finance, because the S.P.R. could get in a month all the money required to endow a university Department. If the Society thinks that, after fifty-seven years, there is no good evidence to put before orthodoxy, then it should consider whether or not it is wasting its time and money, and should contemplate closing its doors. In any case, whatever happens, it will be scientific orthodoxy that will have the last word as to whether the phenomena we call 'psychic' are real or false, and if 'survival' is a fact or fiction.

### CHAPTER III

## 'A FIT SUBJECT OF UNIVERSITY STUDY AND RESEARCH'

THE words which head this chapter formed part of the historic letter<sup>1</sup> sent me by the late Sir Edwin Deller, Principal of the University of London, when he informed me that the Senate had agreed in principle to my offer, made in 1933, to found, equip, and endow a Department of Psychical Research in the University. The proposal was that I should hand over the equipment and library of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research (fully described in Appendix B), the directorship of which I was then relinquishing. Both the Senate and Court were of the opinion that psychical research is 'a fit subject' to be investigated, but at that time no accommodation could be found for the library or laboratory, and no one with the necessary qualifications or time was available to take charge of the proposed new Département. For more than twelve months the proposal had been discussed by the Boards of Studies (Psychology, Physiology, and Medicine) most concerned, and by the Academic Council. But the question of ways and means proved insuperable, and the whole matter was shelved. However, a great victory for psychical research was achieved in the extracting from the Senate that in their opinion 'psychical research is a fit subject of University study and research.' That pronouncement was a memorable one and was indeed worth striving for.

I much sympathized with the Senate in their sustained attempt to arrange matters so that my offer could be accepted. At that time, it was quite obvious that room could not be found for my library and equipment. But more than five years have now passed and during this period the stately pile of the new University buildings at Bloomsbury has been

<sup>1</sup> Dated February 12, 1934.



steadily growing, and I hope that accommodation will shortly be found. Actually, both library and equipment are now housed by the University authorities.

#### FOUNDING OF THE 'UNIVERSITY COUNCIL'

When it was found impracticable to establish the proposed new Department officially, it was suggested that those members of the University who were most interested in psychical research, or had been most concerned in examining my proposal, should form themselves into an unofficial body with the idea of keeping the question alive and remaining in contact with the authorities. Thus was formed the University of London Council for Psychical Investigation. At our first meeting on June 6, 1934, it was resolved 'That this Committee should carry on the work formerly conducted by the National Laboratory of Psychical Research until such time as it was thought desirable to approach again the University authorities as to the formation of a Department for Psychical Research.' And that is how the matter rests at present. Among the members of the Council were Professor F. A. P. Aveling, Dr. Guy B. Brown, Professor Cyril Burt, Professor J. C. Flugel, Dr. C. E. M. Joad (Chairman), Dr. C. A. Mace, the late Dr. E. D. Macnamara, Professor J. MacMurray, Professor C. A. Pannett, Mr. S. G. Soal, and the Rev. Professor E. S. Waterhouse. I was appointed Honorary Secretary.

#### EARLY ATTEMPTS AT INTERESTING ORTHODOXY

The first systematic attempt in Great Britain to examine scientifically the phenomena which we now call psychic was made by a little group of Oxford graduates and undergraduates which went by the name of the Phasmatological Society. This was about 1874. It lasted but a few years and when the British S.P.R. was founded in 1882, the little Oxford group joined their more serious Cambridge brethren. Among the members of the Phasmatological Society were

young men destined to become prominent in various fields, and among these can be mentioned Sir Charles Oman, Dr. F. E. Brightman, and Professor F. C. S. Schiller, who gives some account of the Society in the Clark University symposium.<sup>1</sup>

Other attempts at bringing psychic phenomena to the notice of orthodoxy include the one made by Sir William Barrett when, in 1876, he was successful in persuading the British Association at its meeting in Glasgow to permit him to read a paper<sup>2</sup> on thought-transference, even though its publication in printed form was suppressed. Sir William Crookes also tried to interest official science in his experiments with D. D. Home and Florrie Cook, and invited one of the secretaries of the Royal Society to a séance: he refused.

#### WHAT THE UNIVERSITIES HAVE DONE

In spite of the fact that orthodoxy has, in the past, regarded psychics with a certain amount of disapprobation, a few universities have made notable attempts to turn psychical research into a science. In 1933 a determined effort was made in the University of Belgrade to induce the authorities to sanction courses in psychical research. Though no official action was taken, the principals gave their benevolent sympathy to the Students' Society formed for the purpose of studying paranormal phenomena. The Society formed a Syllabus of Lectures<sup>3</sup> and meetings were held twice a week at the House of Russian Culture. Séances were arranged.

Amongst other Continental universities, Groningen, nearly twenty years ago, staged some experiments in telepathy. They were very ingenious and impressive, and are more fully referred to in Chapter X ('The Story of E.S.P.'). We first heard of them through Dr. H. J. F. W. Brugmans, who read a paper<sup>4</sup> on the subject at the First International Con-

<sup>1</sup> See *The Case For and Against Psychical Belief*, Worcester, Mass., 1927.

<sup>2</sup> *On Some Phenomena Associated with Abnormal Conditions of Mind.*

<sup>3</sup> Given in full in *Bulletin VI* of the Nat. Lab. of Psychical Research, London, 1933, pp. 45-7.

<sup>4</sup> *Le Compte Rendu Officiel du Premier Congrès International des Recherches Psychiques*. . . . Copenhagen, 1922, pp. 396-408.

gress of Psychical Research, held at Copenhagen in 1921. Since that period, both Leiden and Utrecht Universities have established official Departments of Parapsychology, and Drs. P. A. Dietz and W. H. C. Tenhaeff (the first investigator to be appointed officially by any university) respectively are doing good work there. Many of their reports are printed in the Dutch psychic journal *Tijdschrift voor Parapsychologie*, of which they are editors. Another European university where some attempt has been made at interesting official science is that of Riga. The most ambitious experiments were those made with Ilga Kirps<sup>1</sup> in 1934-7 by Professor Ferdinand von Neureiter, Dr. Hans Bender of Bonn, and others. Ilga is a little peasant girl who is stated to be able to read telepathically the thoughts of others, principally those of her mother. At the University of Athens, Professor Voreas is, with Dr. A. Tanagras, conducting certain experiments in psychical research.

#### GROWING AMERICAN INTEREST

I have already mentioned<sup>2</sup> the abortive Seybert Commission of 1884, appointed by the University of Pennsylvania to inquire into the 'truths of modern spiritualism.' In the same year there died Leland, the only child of Leland Stanford (1824-93), aged sixteen years. As a memorial, Stanford founded the 'Leland Stanford Junior University' in the beautiful Santa Clara valley, near Palo Alto, California. He and his wife endowed it with a sum estimated at thirty million dollars.<sup>3</sup> Its doors were opened in 1891. In 1911, Thomas Welton Stanford, a Melbourne millionaire and brother of the American philanthropist, donated to Leland Stanford University the sum of \$50,000, to be used in furthering psychical research.<sup>4</sup> The money was received in 1912, and those interested in parapsychology thought that the time

<sup>1</sup> See *Wissen um fremdes Wissen: Auf unbekanntem Wege Erworben*, by F. von Neureiter, Gotha, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> In the 'Introduction.'

<sup>3</sup> See *Stanford University and Thereabouts*, by O. H. Elliot and O. V. Eaton, San Francisco, 1896.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. John L. Kennedy has held the Fellowship in Psychical Research at Stanford since 1937.

had at last arrived when official science would make a determined effort to investigate whatever truth there was in psychic matters. But, as with the Seybert endowment, little appears to have been accomplished,<sup>1</sup> and, very curiously, it is those universities with the least money which have done the most work. In 1936 Stanford University published a monograph<sup>2</sup> useful alike to the magician and the psychologist.

#### THE HODGSON FELLOWSHIP AT HARVARD

Another attempt to interest the universities in psychical research was made after the death of Dr. Richard Hodgson (1855-1905). Dr. Hodgson was secretary to the American S.P.R. from 1887 until his death, and, as a memorial, a number of his friends established the 'Hodgson Fellowship in Psychical Research,' tenable at Harvard. A fund was raised, but was found insufficient to provide for such a fellowship adequately, and for the expenses likely to be incurred in experiments and investigations. Accordingly, the American S.P.R., by resolution of its Executive Committee, agreed to contribute the excess over the income from the Hodgson bequest. They guaranteed to augment the fund to \$3,000 for the academic years 1922-3 on condition that if the report of the work done should not be published by Harvard University, it could be issued by the American S.P.R. This arrangement was accepted by the University.

It was Dr. Gardner Murphy, a psychologist of Columbia University, who was appointed by Harvard University research fellow for the year 1922-3, under the Hodgson fund. He retained this post until 1925, and devoted about half of his time to the investigation of telepathy. Some account of Dr. Gardner Murphy's work at Harvard is to be found in his paper 'Telepathy as an Experimental Problem,' published in the Clark University symposium.<sup>3</sup> Dr. Murphy's

<sup>1</sup> But see *Experiments in Psychical Research at Leland Stanford*, by J. E. Coover, Stanford University, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *The Psychology of Conjuring*, by R. E. Bernhard, Jr., Stanford University, Stanford, Cal., 1936.

<sup>3</sup> *The Case For and Against Psychical Belief*, op. cit., pp. 265-78.

successor at Harvard was Dr. G. H. Estabrooks, who also devoted his time to experimental telepathy.<sup>1</sup> Why students of psychical research in all countries choose telepathy as a subject is because few or no professional mediums are required; the apparatus used is usually simple; control is easy; results can be definite, and investigation costs little.

#### THE CLARK UNIVERSITY SYMPOSIUM

One of the most interesting experiments connected with psychical research ever made by an academic body was the public symposium held at Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts, November 29 to December 11, 1926. It was arranged by Professor Dr. Carl Murchison that a number of persons interested in psychic matters should either speak at the symposium or send in papers to be read. Dr. Murchison is himself a psychologist, and it is natural that the majority of those invited to take part in the symposium were also psychologists or philosophers.

There were four classes of speakers: (I) Those 'convinced of the multiplicity of psychical phenomena' (Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir A. Conan Doyle, F. Bligh Bond, Dr. L. R. G. Crandon (husband of 'Margery'), Mary Austin and Margaret Deland); (II) those 'convinced of the rarity of genuine psychical phenomena' (Professor McDougall, Professor Hans Driesch, Dr. W. F. Prince, and Professor F. C. S. Schiller); (III) those 'unconvinced as yet' (Dr. John E. Coover and Dr. Gardner Murphy); (IV) and those 'antagonistic to the claims that such phenomena occur' (Professor Joseph Jastrow and Harry Houdini). All these papers were published in 1927 in one volume under the title *The Case For and Against Psychical Belief*, edited by Dr. Murchison, who warns the reader in his Preface that, in arranging the symposium, Clark University 'is by no means assuming the rôle of friend to psychical research.' Apparently his warning was necessary, as Sir Oliver Lodge begins his paper ('The University Aspect of Psychical Research') with the sen-

<sup>1</sup> See 'A Contribution to Experimental Telepathy,' by G. H. Estabrooks, *Bulletin V*, Boston S.P.R., 1927.

tence: 'I can but heartily welcome the pioneer effort of Clark University to take the subject of psychical research under its wing and give it the prestige of academic recognition.'

*The Case For and Against Psychical Belief* is well worth reading, especially the papers by Sir Oliver Lodge, Hans Driesch ('Psychical Research and Philosophy'), W. F. Prince ('Is Psychical Research Worth While?') and Dr. Schiller ('Some Logical Aspects of Psychical Research'). I think the scientific standard of the book is lowered by the reprinting of chapters from Houdini's *A Magician Among the Spirits*,<sup>1</sup> a collection of mediumistic tricks most of which no fake medium outside a lunatic asylum would dare to use.

#### 'MIRACLES' AT DUKE UNIVERSITY

Very soon after the Clark symposium, Dr. J. B. Rhine and his wife, Dr. Louisa E. Rhine, both biologists of the University of Chicago, turned their attention to the alleged telepathic faculties of animals, and their experiments with 'Lady,' the 'mind-reading horse' are well known. In the summer of 1930, the Rhines turned their attention to human subjects and, having now discarded biology for the psychological field, began a series of tests in telepathy and clairvoyance at Duke University, North Carolina, in connection with the Department of Psychology, of which Professor McDougall was the head. With Dr. Karl Zener and Dr. Helge Lundholm, of the same Department, the Rhines embarked upon a long series of 'card calling' experiments with hundreds of students and others, using cards marked with the five symbols: circle, rectangle, plus sign, star, and wavy lines. Dr. Rhine suggested the term 'extra-sensory perception' as being more suitable than the older forms, telepathy, thought-transference, and clairvoyance.

Dr. Rhine and his colleagues at Duke discovered that certain of the students and others possessed the telepathic or clairvoyant faculty to an extraordinary degree. Some 100,000 tests were made in the first period and the good

<sup>1</sup> Harper & Brothers, New York, 1924.

'guesses' recorded exceeded any estimate based on chance. In fact, some of the results savour of the miraculous. Though psychical researchers have, for eighty years, been seeking a subject able to demonstrate at will, under controlled conditions, the faculty of telepathy and failed to find one, Dr. Rhine discovered scores of them in his own University—some even in his own class-room.

The results of the first period of Dr. Rhine's work were published in 1934 by the Boston S.P.R.,<sup>1</sup> and in London the following year. Among those who took the results at their face value, the book created a sensation. Those more sceptical began to experiment for themselves. Among these was Mr. S. G. Soal, of London University, who, for the past four years, has been duplicating Rhine's experiments, but not his good results.<sup>2</sup> Rhine's technique was 'tightened up.' Out of many thousands of 'guesses,' with many percipients, the good ones did not amount to more than chance would account for. There were no miracles in London. For these experiments, I asked a firm of playing-card manufacturers to print special cards, on the faces of which were the Zener symbols as used by Rhine. These cards were much better than the early home-made ones used at Duke, which slightly varied in size.

Dr. Rhine has also experimented with Mrs. Eileen Garrett, the British trance medium whom I introduced to American psychists in my article in the *Cosmopolitan Magazine* in 1931.<sup>3</sup> He obtained some extraordinarily successful results.<sup>4</sup> Later, in England, Mr. Soal and a group also conducted a long series of experiments in telepathy and clairvoyance with Mrs. Garrett. The results were entirely negative.<sup>5</sup>

Mrs. Garrett has also been tested at Johns Hopkins University, but no official report has been issued. Other academic centres, too, became interested in the Duke successes and among those who experimented were Dr. J. G. Pratt (Columbia), J. L. Woodruff and Dr. R. W. George (Tarkio

<sup>1</sup> *Extra-Sensory Perception*, Boston, Mass., 1934.

<sup>2</sup> Report not yet issued.

<sup>3</sup> New York, January, 1931. An account of a séance at which the 'Conan Doyle' entity was alleged to control the medium.

<sup>4</sup> 'Telepathy and Clairvoyance in the Normal and Trance States of a "Medium",' *Character and Personality*, London, December, 1934.

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter X.

College, Missouri), and Dr. C. R. Carpenter and Professor H. R. Phalen (Columbia). Their work is recorded in the *Journal of Parapsychology*, issued by Duke University Press, a quarterly which sprang into being as a result of the Rhine tests. It was first published in March, 1937.

I cannot close my record of American universities without mentioning the important 'history of spiritualism'<sup>1</sup> by Dr. George Lawton. It was the thesis he submitted to Columbia University when he studied for his degree of doctor of philosophy, and is an impartial—and rather amusing—study of, especially, American spiritualism. His account of the American spiritualist 'camps' (Lily Dale, Chesterfield, etc.) is valuable.

#### THE THIRD REICH DECLARES PSYCHICAL RESEARCH AN OFFICIAL SCIENCE

The outstanding event in psychical research during recent years is the declaration of the German Government that it would be prepared officially to give its blessing to a Department of Parapsychology at Bonn University, if I would found it. When Professor Dr. E. Rothacker, the Director of the Bonn Psychologisches Institut, and his colleague Dr. Hans Bender, heard that I was anxious for academic support for my scheme of introducing psychical research into the universities, I was invited to Bonn to talk the matter over. In the meantime, the whole question was referred to the German Home Office, Board of Education, the Foreign Office, and Ministry of Propaganda. In March, 1937, I was officially informed by letter that the German Government, having thoroughly examined the whole question, was favourable to the founding of the proposed new Department at Bonn. The letter<sup>2</sup> stated that the Government 'authorized the establishment of a Department for Abnormal Psychology and Parapsychology (*Forschungsstelle für psychologische Grenzwissenschaften*) and think of special interest to this Department,

<sup>1</sup> *The Drama of Life after Death: A Study of the Spiritualist Religion*, by George Lawton, London, 1933.

<sup>2</sup> Dated March 20, 1937.



besides the research work, questions of social hygiene in occult matters.' This letter, like the one I have quoted from Sir Edwin Deller, is of great historical interest, as the Third Reich is the first Government officially to place its cachet on psychical research. This is the more striking, as spiritualism has been suppressed in Germany. The letter I have cited proposed various academic honours for me in the event of my founding the proposed new Department.

#### WHY BRITAIN LAGS BEHIND

Academically, Great Britain has shown little interest—officially—in psychical research. Although the Society for Psychical Research has been established for more than fifty years, little had been done in this country to attract organized science until I launched my 'campaign' to interest the University of London. If, in the past, the S.P.R. had made a real attempt at founding a chair or fellowship at one of the principal universities, they would have succeeded—especially at Cambridge, the home of modern psychical research. But nothing was done. Unofficially, both Oxford and Cambridge have had for many years small societies, supported by a few undergraduates, for the study of psychic matters. This also applies to foreign universities. I personally have, more than once, lectured within the precincts of the following universities: Oxford, Cambridge, London, Nottingham (University College), the Sorbonne, Vienna, Copenhagen, Oslo, Göttingen, and Berlin. My visits were arranged by those professors and others interested in the subject, but, so far as 'orthodoxy' was concerned, they were not always official.

Why does official science take so little interest in psychical research? Quoting Professor Schiller, the reason is because there is no money in it: 'The occult can never become scientifically established until it becomes a commercial success. . . . At present there is no money wherewith to prosecute researches, nor any likelihood of raising an adequate supply until the suspicion has arisen that there is money in it; because it is necessary, in this case, to convert both the masses

and the professors.'<sup>1</sup> At least an attempt is being made to convert the masses. In New York, I am told, Rhine's experimental E.S.P. cards are being sold on every newsstand at ten cents a packet: this is bringing psychics—literally—to the man-in-the-street!

<sup>1</sup> *Occult Review*, Vol. I, No. 1, January, 1905.

## CHAPTER IV

### FIFTY YEARS OF PHYSICAL PHENOMENA

**I**N planning this work, I decided that I would write two chapters on physical manifestations: one, dealing with those mediums whose phenomena were so well attested that they could be counted as 'genuine'; the second, a review of the tricks practised by conjurers—male and female—posing as mediums. But I found that I should have to compromise, as 'genuine' mediums were caught cheating at times, and some recognized cheaters occasionally produced good phenomena, according to capable observers. So in this chapter I have also included those psychics who may have produced genuine phenomena—at times. Such famous, interesting, and puzzling mediums as the Schneider boys, Stella C., and 'Margery' have been dealt with in separate chapters.

#### TELEKINETIC PHENOMENA

The objective metapsychic phenomenon which most impresses the scientist—especially the physicist—is that of telekinesis, and one of the most convincing exponents of this phase of mediumship was a Neapolitan peasant, Eusapia Palladino (1854–1918). There have been some fantastic stories concerning the discovery of her faculty, but as a young woman she was an acknowledged physical medium and was tested by various Italian scientists. We first hear of her in a letter from Ercole Chiaia to Lombroso in 1888.

Eusapia submitted herself to numerous tests and scientific committees<sup>1</sup> and was sometimes pronounced genuine and sometimes fraudulent. She was the first to admit that, if not prevented by an adequate tactual control, she would cheat.

<sup>1</sup> In Rome, Naples, Paris, Warsaw, St. Petersburg, New York, and other capitals.

Her telekinetic phenomena were frequently accompanied by a 'psychic arm' or pseudo-limb, which was seen on many occasions under excellent conditions of control.

Amongst the principal investigations was one organized by Richet and Ochorowicz at the former's residence in Roubaud, one of the Îles d'Hyères, in 1894. The observers included Lodge, Myers, and others. For the experiments Richet had constructed a square table measuring 39 inches each way, and 39 inches high. It weighed 44 pounds. At the first séance it was levitated completely: 'As soon as Eusapia touched this heavy table with the tips of her fingers, it tilted, swaying about, and without the legs being touched at all, it rose up completely with all four feet off the ground. All hypotheses that attempt to explain this by normal mechanics are absurd.'<sup>1</sup>

Eusapia often gave warning that a phenomenon was about to occur, and the observers redoubled their vigilance in controlling the medium. The ringing of a bell at a distance from the medium, movements of articles some feet away from her, the flight of objects, knocks, raps, etc., were amongst the phenomena witnessed at Roubaud. A peculiar feature of Eusapia's mediumship was the fact that the telekinetic displacement of objects often synchronized with violent muscular movements on the part of the psychic. The sittings at Roubaud so impressed Myers that he arranged a further series of experiments at his house in Cambridge for the following year. These took place in the summer of 1895. The Cambridge inquiry was in the nature of a fiasco, and undoubtedly Eusapia cheated continuously, as she frankly admitted. Twenty séances were held, and among the observers were Lodge, John Nevil Maskelyne, and Dr. Hodgson, who purposely permitted the medium to free her hand, in order to see if she would cheat. She did! The Cambridge séances were of little value from a scientific point of view.

After a further long investigation by the Institut Général Psychologique of Paris (1905-8)<sup>2</sup> the British S.P.R. sent (1908) a commission to Naples in an attempt to determine

<sup>1</sup> Richet, *Thirty Years of Psychic Research*, p. 402.

<sup>2</sup> See *Rapport sur les Séances d'Eusapia Palladino à l'Institut Général Psychologique* . . . by Jules Courtier, Paris, 1908.

the genuineness or otherwise of Eusapia's phenomena. The investigators were Hereward Carrington, W. W. Baggally (*d.* 1928) and Everard Feilding. The two first-named possessed a considerable knowledge of conjuring. The sittings were held in their own rooms at the Hotel Victoria, Naples, and the usual varied telekinetic phenomena and materializations were witnessed, under perfect conditions of control. The illumination employed enabled them to see the medium at all times, and her limbs were controlled separately by the observers, to whose hands she was sometimes tied. Notes were taken by a stenographer in a far corner of the room. This Naples inquiry finally set the seal on Eusapia's genuineness and that arch-sceptic Everard Feilding was at last convinced. I have discussed these sittings with him many times. On one occasion, he told me, while he was holding Eusapia's two hands, which were in full view, a *third hand*, from behind the cabinet curtain, grasped his fingers so tightly that he could feel the nails pressing into his flesh. A portion of the verbatim report of this séance is reproduced in Carrington's *The Story of Psychic Science*,<sup>1</sup> and the full account of the Commission's findings is given in the S.P.R. *Proceedings*.<sup>2</sup> There is a considerable literature devoted to Eusapia, which should be studied.<sup>3</sup> To sum up, the paranormality of her phenomena was scientifically demonstrated, and if there was no other record extant of a physical medium, the phenomenon of telekinesis would by these experiments, be amply proved.

#### STANISLAWA TOMCZYK

Another medium (non-professional) who produced telekinetic phenomena of unquestionable genuineness was Stanislaw Tomczyk, a young Polish girl. She was investigated by Ochorowicz, Flournoy, Richet, Schrenck-Notzing and other famous psychists. A feature of her mediumship was the ability to produce telekinetic movements to order, in the laboratory, under perfect conditions. A favourite experi-

<sup>1</sup> London, 1930, pp. 217-8.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. XXIII, pp. 306-569.

<sup>3</sup> See *Psicologia e Spiritismo*, by Enrico Morselli, Torino, 1908, for a bibliography of Eusapia Palladino. Also *Journal*, S.P.R., Vols. VI, VII, XIV, XV.

ment was the supranormal raising, in full light, of a small object (e.g. a table-tennis ball) when placed between, and at a distance of about an inch from the two hands of the medium. Stanislawa would go into a light trance, under hypnosis or self-induced, and, at request, would raise her hands. The object rose with them. Numerous photographs<sup>1</sup> were taken of this phenomenon and some of them revealed a psychic extrusion, in the form of a fine fluidic thread between the fingers of the medium and the object levitated. This psychic nexus was also registered on a photographic plate through an opaque envelope. Ochorowicz also claimed, that on one occasion a garden chair moved and tilted *to order*, in full light, when Mlle Tomczyk was near.<sup>2</sup>

#### ANNA AND THE PENDULUMS

To sit in a sunlit room, and observe pendulums swinging at command, of their own volition, in a sealed glass case, is an experience never to be forgotten. I have witnessed this feat on more than one occasion in the laboratory and home of Professor Christian Winther of Copenhagen, through the mediumship of Anna Rasmussen. This was in 1927.

Anna was one of the very few telekinetic mediums who could produce phenomena under laboratory conditions of control, in full light. The technique was as follows: Sunk into a concrete pillar on a concrete floor was a tall glass shade. Suspended in the interior of the shade were a number of bobbins or pendulums of dissimilar weights, hung by silk threads. No normal outside influence could move the bobbins, and the whole set-up was vibration-proof. The bobbins could not be moved by knocking the set-up or stamping on the floor. Around the set-up the sitters would range themselves, each person being at about one metre distant from the pendulums. Anna would then go into a very light trance, and her alleged 'spirit control,' 'Dr.

<sup>1</sup> See Richet's *Thirty Years of Psychical Research*, Figs. 11 to 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Annales des Sciences Psychiques*, Paris, 1910, XX, p. 369, cited by Richet. See also *Physikalische Phaenomene des Mediumismus*, by Schrenck-Notzing, Munich, 1920.

Lasaruz,' would speak through, of course, the medium's vocal organs. 'Dr. Lasaruz' would then be asked to move the bobbins. Very slowly, one of the bobbins would begin to move, gradually increasing its impetus until it struck the side of the glass shade.

At the séances I attended at Copenhagen, the bobbins were made to move to order, in various directions. At command, they would lose amplitude, and slowly come to rest. At request, one bobbin would tell us the time by striking the nearest hour on the glass shade. At the last séance at which I was present we used bobbins containing electric pea-lights which traced their pendulatory motions on to a moving strip of bromide paper. A permanent record of their movements was thus obtained. Professor Winther devoted many years to studying Anna Rasmussen and has published an important monograph<sup>1</sup> on his results. Anna appears to have lost her power. She visited London in the winter of 1938, but produced no phenomena worth speaking about.

#### A VIENNA POLTERGEIST

It is a maxim that in *Poltergeist* cases, one practically never witnesses the displaced objects in flight, or the beginning of the telekinetic movements which are a feature of these cases. A classic exception to the above rule was Eleonore Zugun, a little Roumanian girl, accounts of whose telekinetic or *Poltergeist* phenomena filled the psychic and lay Press during the years 1926-7.

Eleonore was born in Talpa, Roumania, on May 13, 1913, and was first studied by Fritz Grunewald. His friend the Countess Wassilko-Serecki then removed the child from her rather unsuitable home surroundings and adopted her. She resided with the Countess at her flat in the Josefstadterstrasse, Vienna. Soon after her arrival in Vienna, Professor Hans Thirring, of Vienna University, wrote and informed me of the alleged amazing phenomena which the girl was producing, and invited me to investigate.

<sup>1</sup> 'Experimental Inquiries into Telekinesis,' in the *Journal of the Am. S.P.R.*, New York, January-May, 1928.

My first séance with Eleonore was at 5.15 p.m. on May 1, 1926, in the Countess's study-bedroom, fifteen feet square. The sun was shining, and the large French windows flooded the room with light. Both windows and door were fastened. Only the Countess, Eleonore and myself were present. The apartment was simply furnished with a couch, chairs, table, etc., on one side of the room, which was divided longitudinally by means of a matchboard partition, six feet high, with an opening in it at one end. On the far side of the partition were the usual bed, toilet table, chairs, etc.

I had brought Eleonore a toy spring-gun, firing a celluloid ball which was caught in a wire basket attached to the gun. The Countess and I sat on the couch watching the child play with her toy. In a few minutes, the ball had divided into its component halves and the child ran to us with a request that we should mend it. The Countess and I rose and while she was holding one half of the ball, and Eleonore the other, a long steel stiletto paper-knife shot across the room *from behind me*, just missing my head, and fell against the door. I was intently watching the Countess and her *protégée* attending to the toy and can swear that neither touched the stiletto, whose normal resting-place was on a writing-table near the French windows, which were closed and fastened. I was between the table and my hostess, and whatever projected the stiletto *must* have been behind me. But there was no tangible being behind me, and the paper-knife could not have been thrown normally. A further and minute search of the apartment threw no light on the phenomenon, which occurred at 5.43.

The flight of the stiletto was the first of many telekinetic phenomena. At 5.58 a small hand mirror was thrown *over the partition* from the bed side of the room, while the Countess, Eleonore and I were by the couch in the study portion. At 6.15 a metal cap was thrown from the bedroom side of the partition and fell at our feet. At 6.32 a large stuffed cloth dog was thrown *from our side* of the partition and fell on the coal-scuttle near the bed. I had just previously noticed the toy dog on a chair to the right of me; the Countess and Eleonore were on my *left*: neither could have touched it. It is interesting to note that after each phenomenon, the child's



pulse-rate increased. Her normal rate was 75; after a minor telekinetic displacement it rose to 95; after the 'flight' of the dog it had increased to 126 with some palpitation of the heart.

Soon after the toy dog incident I was watching Eleonore scribbling on a piece of paper. Between the child and me was a chair on which rested a large square cushion. Both girl and cushion were in my line of vision, and the child was five and a half feet away from the chair. The Countess was on the other side of me. At 6.33, as I gazed at it, the cushion slowly slid off the chair. There was no vibration in the room. After each phenomenon I searched the double apartment, and found nothing that could account for these most convincing manifestations, a detailed account of which should be read.<sup>1</sup>

I was so impressed with Eleonore that I persuaded the Countess to bring her to London. They arrived on September 30, 1926, and left on the following October 24. Under much better conditions, and in my own laboratory, numerous telekinetic movements of objects were recorded. Especially striking were the experiments arranged by the late Dr. R. J. Tillyard, F.R.S., and myself in which coins placed on the lintel of our séance-room door, six feet, ten and three-quarter inches from the ground, were supernaturally displaced under perfect control conditions. An attempt to induce phenomena while the girl was being hypnotized by Professor McDougall produced no results.

A curious feature of Eleonore's telekinetic phenomena was the accompanying stigmata. Just before, during, or immediately after a phenomenon, red weals would spontaneously appear on various parts of the girl's body. They would gradually turn white, and slowly disappear. A prolonged study of the stigmata suggested that they were really due to physiological causes induced by the mental excitement of the telekinetic phenomena. It is interesting to note that the phenomena, both telekinetic and stigmatic, ceased abruptly after the first appearance of the menses. Eleonore, now

<sup>1</sup> 'Some Account of the Poltergeist Phenomena of Eleonore Zugun,' by Harry Price, in the *Journal of the Am. S.P.R.*, August, 1926.

aged 26, manages her own hairdressing business in Czer-nowitz, Roumania.<sup>1</sup>

#### PHENOMENA IN THE 'BLUE ROOM'

Eleonore Zugun is not alone in producing telekinetic phenomena in a well-lighted room or in daylight. The case of Miss Pearl Judd, of Dunedin, New Zealand, is comparable with that of Eleonore, and there are many correspondences in the mediumship of these young women. I have never seen Miss Judd, but Dr. W. P. Gowland, Professor of Anatomy at the Medical School, Dunedin, who investigated her case, was much impressed with what he saw and heard. He was in London in 1930 and detailed to me his experiments.

At the period of which I am writing, Miss Judd resided at the house of her uncle, Mr. Clive Chapman, and the séances were held in a certain 'blue room.' In the ordinary illumination of this apartment Professor Gowland witnessed the following phenomena: The levitation of a heavy table when merely the finger-tips of the circle were resting upon it, and the sudden inability to raise this table by normal means (the familiar 'light and heavy' phenomenon claimed by some mediums); the playing of a selected tune on an ordinary piano when three people were sitting on the closed and locked lid; and many 'voices,' conversing and singing, and the playing of invisible instruments. Dr. Gowland saw no trickery and such obvious theories as mechanical contrivances and radio were, upon examination, found to be untenable.

The 'voices' were remarkable and purported to be those of entities calling themselves 'Captain Trevor,' 'Ronald,' 'George Thurston,' 'Charlie,' 'Grace,' 'Olive,' and 'Wee Betty.' These entities sang, apparently at request, any specified tune that was known to them. Miss Judd is about thirty years old and has been mediumistic for many years. A large number of scientists, doctors, conjurers and Pressmen have witnessed the phenomena, and none has been able to suggest

<sup>1</sup> For a full account of the London experiments, see *Proceedings of the Nat. Lab. of Psychical Research*, London, 1927, Vol. I, Part 1.

a feasible explanation except an abnormal one. Mr. Clive Chapman has written a full account<sup>1</sup> of the manifestations.

#### THE GOLIGHER CIRCLE

Still another young woman was the centre of a circle formed in Belfast to develop the telekinetic and other phenomena of an Irish family named Goligher. Kathleen Goligher and her three sisters were all mediumistic, and the other members of the family (father, son, etc.) formed the 'circle.'

The manifestations attracted the attention of Dr. W. J. Crawford, a lecturer in engineering at the Municipal Technical Institute, Belfast, and he decided to make a prolonged study of the dynamics of telekinesis as demonstrated by Kathleen Goligher and her sisters. The séances were held usually at Mr. Goligher's house or occasionally in Dr. Crawford's own home. It is with the utmost difficulty that an investigator can adequately control *one* medium; but Dr. Crawford considered that he could properly immobilize a room full of mediums and their relatives, in darkness or semi-darkness, and this fact is one of the great weaknesses of Crawford's many reports<sup>2</sup> of his experiments.

Crawford sat with the Goligher circle for six years until he committed suicide on July 30, 1920. There is no evidence that his death was connected with his psychic investigations. He concluded that the raps, levitation of the table, etc., were accomplished by 'cantilevers' made of teleplasmic 'rods' or extrusions from the lower portion of the medium's body, and made many experiments (described in detail in his books) in order to confirm his theory. He also concluded that one end of the teleplasmic 'rods' was used for making the raps which were frequently heard, the intelligence behind the raps coming from the medium herself. He even obtained impressions of the 'pseudopods' or 'arms' in various plastic substances. Finally, photographs of the alleged 'psychic levers' were published.

<sup>1</sup> *The Blue Room*, Dunedin, 1927.

<sup>2</sup> See his *The Reality of Psychic Phenomena*, London, 1916; *Experiments in Psychical Science*, London, 1919; *The Psychic Structures at the Goligher Circle*, London, 1921.

Shortly after Crawford's death, Dr. E. E. Fournier D'Albe<sup>1</sup> visited Belfast with the intention of continuing and confirming Crawford's experiments. He had twenty sittings with Kathleen Goligher and duplicated many of Crawford's tests. His report<sup>2</sup> was published in 1922 and is completely negative. He stated that all he saw—and photographed—could be explained in terms of normality and his findings created something of a sensation, coming as they did after Crawford's so very positive results. Miss Goligher (now married) rarely exercised her mediumship after the adverse report, and the case will remain one of the many interesting psychic mysteries.

#### 'THE SEERESS OF WALTENDORF'

One of the most famous, puzzling and versatile physical mediums of the past fifty years was Frau Maria Silbert, the 'Seeress of Waltendorf,' Austria. Telekinetic phenomena, apports, materializations, continuous raps, and 'psychic lights' were but a few of her many manifestations.

Maria was a non-professional medium, always willing—even anxious—to demonstrate her powers to any who would trouble to visit her home at Waltendorf, a suburb of Graz. Her phenomena were spectacular, and rarely did she sit in the dark. But, what answered the same purpose, she usually formed her circle in the light round a heavy wooden table, *under* which the phenomena occurred.

I first sat with Frau Silbert during one of her rare appearances in London, and must admit I was impressed with the phenomena, mostly of a percussive or telekinetic nature. We sat in a good light and, sitting on her left, I controlled her left hand with my right, and attempted to control her left foot and leg with my feet. The other side of the medium was controlled by a lady sitting on her right.

The most striking manifestations that afternoon were the lightning displacements of objects placed on the floor under the heavy wooden table (in the top of which was a small trap door) round which we were sitting. A small bell, a

<sup>1</sup> Died July 7, 1933, aged 65.

<sup>2</sup> *The Goligher Circle: May to August, 1921*, London, 1922.

watch, and a heavy penknife belonging to myself appeared successively in the medium's hands, although a second previously they were on the floor. Once or twice a white object was seen momentarily at the aperture in the table top, and I suspected it was the toes of the medium's right foot, which, for a fraction of a second had been removed from her elastic-sided boots.

A year or so later I had proof that the medium removed her right foot from her boot during a séance. I was in Graz in 1925 and on November 3 of that year I had a séance with her. We sat round the usual heavy table, under which various objects had been placed. One of these was my gold lighter, which suddenly appeared on top of the table, with the word 'Nell' engraved on it. 'Dr. Nell' was Frau Silbert's alleged spirit guide. I asked whether I could look under the table in order to witness the beginning of the flight of the objects. Permission was given, and for thirty minutes I was bobbing up and down trying to detect any movement in the medium's feet. At last I was rewarded: almost simultaneously with the flight of an object I saw the medium's right foot out of her boot, and her toes were plainly visible. Evidently, she had cut off the end of her stocking, thus enabling her to use her toes to pick up objects. I am quite satisfied she did this, and undoubtedly she was very clever at it. I said nothing at the time as I was then trying to get her to London for some experiments in my laboratory. I did not succeed.<sup>1</sup>

My last sitting with Frau Silbert was in 1931 at the house of my friend Professor Haslinger in Graz. The medium was not well, and no telekinetic phenomena occurred. But, under the glare of the electric light, we heard raps, sometimes at command, in various parts of the room, and these were impressive. To sum up, I believe that Frau Silbert (who died in 1937) had genuine psychic powers (e.g. the raps) but that the major phenomena witnessed through this medium were produced by normal means.

<sup>1</sup> My report on these experiences can be found in the *Journal of the Am. S.P.R.*, New York, 1926, Vol. XX, pp. 265-79. See also *Daily News*, London, January 6, 1926, and *Der Physikalische Mediumismus*, by Dr. von Gulat-Wellenburg [and others], Berlin, 1925, pp. 482-6.

## PHOTOGRAPHING THE SPIRITS

A young Italian woman who produced both telekinetic phenomena and materializations was Linda Gazzera, of good family and a non-professional medium. She was studied principally by Dr. E. Imoda of Turin, G. de Fontenay, and Professor Richet. Under a good control, rapid telekinetic movements were observed, the objects being manipulated by a psychic extrusion or pseudopod in the form of an extra arm, reminiscent of Eusapia Palladino. Her 'controls,' 'Vincenzo' and 'Carlotta,' would sometimes produce phenomena at request. Occasionally, teleplasmic forms were visible and some remarkable photographs of these were secured by Dr. Imoda, who reproduced them in his book.<sup>1</sup> Although Richet wrote a preface to this work, he criticizes<sup>2</sup> Imoda for a lack of proper control of the medium.

Another medium, Indride Indridason (a compositor), of Iceland, was investigated by Professor Haraldur Nielsson of the University of Reykjavik and a number of local scientists. For more than five years Nielsson and his friends accumulated a mass of evidence seeming to prove the validity of the telekinetic and materializing phenomena produced through Indridason. The death of the medium (in 1912) prevented any full report being published, but one of the sitters, Professor Gudmundur Hannesson, wrote a long account<sup>3</sup> of his experiences. He concludes: 'The phenomena are unquestionable realities.' Attempts were made to photograph the materializations, without good results. I have discussed Indridason's mediumship with Professor Nielsson and was impressed with what he told me.

## MARTHE'S 'MIRACLES'

At the beginning of this chapter I stated that I would include among the best physical mediums who have operated

<sup>1</sup> *Fotografie di Fantasmi*, Torino, 1912.

<sup>2</sup> *Thirty Years of Psychological Research*, p. 525.

<sup>3</sup> 'Remarkable Phenomena in Iceland' in the *Journal of the Am. S.P.R.*, New York, April, 1924, pp. 233-72.

during the past fifty years 'those who have probably produced genuine phenomena.' Whether Marthe Béraud, otherwise Eva C. (Eva Carrière), has ever produced a genuine phenomenon in her life has been much debated. I will give her the benefit of the doubt and include her 'case' in this chapter.

Marthe, or, as we will now call her, Eva, had her first séances with General and Madame Noel, to whose son she was engaged. They sat at the General's residence at Algiers, known as the Villa Carmen. The other sitters included Richet, Delanne and two sisters of the medium. A negress, Aischa, usually sat in the cabinet with Eva.

The séance-room was illuminated by means of a red lamp. During the sittings a 'phantom,' which they called Bien Boa, materialized several times, and could be seen at the *same time* in the cabinet with Eva and the negress. Bien Boa wore a helmet over which was a white sheet. Photographs were taken and Richet reproduces one in his book.<sup>1</sup> It does not look unlike a girl dressed up, and the beard appears to be a false one. The conditions were not very good. Eva was not undressed but Richet states<sup>2</sup> that 'I could be sure, by passing my hand all over her body' that she had nothing on her, except her ordinary clothes. Of course, he could do nothing of the sort, as every experienced investigator knows.

Richet tells us that Bien Boa was 'so much alive' that he walked and moved, his eyes rolled, and some attempt at speech was made. A flask of baryta water reacted to his breath and carbon dioxide was indicated.

The Villa Carmen experiments were criticized by various people and Areski, General Noel's Arab coachman, declared that he 'played the ghost' at the séances. He demonstrated in public how it was done. Eva is also alleged to have confessed to an Algiers lawyer that she cheated. But the evidence for both Areski's declaration and Eva's alleged confession is not very good. Another phantom which appeared at the Villa Carmen was said to be the spirit of an Egyptian princess and Richet tells<sup>3</sup> us how he cut a lock of her 'fine,

<sup>1</sup> *Thirty Years of Psychical Research*, p. 507.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 505.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 509.

silky, fair hair' just before she disappeared. Eva's hair was very dark. Madame Noel published<sup>1</sup> an account of the Villa Carmen experiments.

Eva C. was later adopted by Madame Juliette Alexandre-Bisson<sup>2</sup> who, with Gustave Geley, Schrenck-Notzing and others, investigated her mediumship for many years. All the above-named were convinced of the genuineness of the phenomena, mostly materializations. Schrenck published<sup>3</sup> many photographs of these 'phantoms,' very artificial-looking and two-dimensional, as though made of cardboard, newspaper portraits, etc. (See Plate I.) A sensation was caused when Mlle Berthe Barklay published in the *Psychic Magazine*<sup>4</sup> a reproduction of a portrait of President Wilson from *Le Miroir* side by side with one of Eva's paper phantoms. The latter looks exactly like the picture of the President which appeared in the newspaper, but altered and touched up.

In 1920 Eva was invited by the S.P.R. to submit to an investigation in London. She arrived with Mme Bisson, and forty séances, under the direction of Dr. V. J. Woolley and Dr. E. J. Dingwall, were held.<sup>5</sup> The sittings were almost uniformly blank. The little 'materialized' substance which was secured proved, on analysis, to be chewed paper. This gave rise to the regurgitation theory. Occasionally, a tiny head could be seen in the exuded mass. Following the S.P.R. investigation, Paul Heuzé requested the Sorbonne to conduct a further inquiry into Eva's alleged phenomena. The fifteen sittings took place in the physiological laboratory of the Faculty of Science during March-June, 1922, the investigators being Professors Louis Lapique, Georges Dumas, Henri Pieron and Dr. Henri Laugier. The result of the tests was entirely negative.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Conférence sur le Moderne Spiritualisme faite à Alger*, by Carmencita Noel, Paris, 1900. See also: 'Bien Boa. The Hypothesis of the Artist G. von Max, concerning the Clothing of "Bien Boa,"' in the *Ann. of Psych. Sci.*, London, 1906, IV, 38-54.

<sup>2</sup> See her *Les Phénomènes dits de Matérialisation*, Paris, 1921.

<sup>3</sup> *Phenomena of Materialization*, London, 1920.

<sup>4</sup> Paris, January 1, 1914. Vol. I, No. 1.

<sup>5</sup> See 'A Report on a series of sittings with Eva C.,' by E. J. Dingwall, *Proc.*, S.P.R., London, January, 1922, Vol. XXXII, pp. 209-343.

<sup>6</sup> See *L'Opinion*, Paris, July 8-29, 1922. For the English translation of the Sorbonne report, see *Journal of the Am. S.P.R.*, New York, Vol. XVII, February, 1923, pp. 63-78. For Mme Bisson's 'reply,' see her *Le Médiumnisme et la Sorbonne*, Paris, 1923.



We hear little of Eva after the Sorbonne fiasco, and her mediumship must be regarded as 'not proven.' As the control of her person was tightened up, so the phenomena became fewer and less spectacular. During her best period (with Schrenck and Geley) the control was bad. In Schrenck's laboratory in Munich and at the Institut Métapsychique, Paris, I have seen stereoscopic positives of photographs taken during the production of her famous 'cardboard' phantoms, in which Eva has *both hands free!*

#### KLUSKI AND HIS SPIRIT 'GLOVES'

Quite the most interesting physical mediumship recorded during the past fifty years is that of 'Franek Kluski,' a Polish banker, who introduced a new technique into séances by producing thin wax 'gloves' of materialized spirit hands. A pail of hot paraffin wax and another filled with cold water are in readiness at his sittings, and the splashings in the pails can be distinctly heard. At the end of the séance (usually held in darkness or a feeble light) very thin wax shells or 'gloves' of spirit hands are found floating on the water. Sometimes two hands, entwined or interlocked, and with bent fingers, are secured. When these delicate moulds are filled with plaster-of-Paris (which is allowed to set), the wax is dissolved with boiling water and the resultant casts can be examined freely. (Plate II.) A feature of these séances is that the 'hands' are quite unlike those of any person present at the séances at which they are produced; and for a long time it was thought impossible that such moulds could be made normally owing to the difficulty of a human being drawing his hand (or hands) through the small wrist aperture of the delicate wax shell. But they *have* been produced normally and specimens of hands, fingers entwined, are on view at the Institut Métapsychique. Of course, that does not explain how such 'gloves' could be produced normally at Kluski's séances. These same intricate moulds can also be produced by Dr. A. Poller's 'Moulage' process.<sup>1</sup> Photographs of many of Kluski's materialized hands and feet were

<sup>1</sup> See his *The Ideal Materials for Plastic Reproductions*, New York, 1933.

reproduced by Gustave Geley in the *Revue Métapsychique*,<sup>1</sup> and crude imitations have appeared at 'Margery's' séances.

#### THE 'PITHECANTHROPUS' AND HIS FRIENDS

Kluski also produces 'animals' at his séances, some of them very disturbing. It is not at all easy to obtain sittings with Kluski and his famous animals do not always materialize. F. W. Pawlowski, Professor of Aeronautical Engineering in the University of Michigan, has written a vivid account<sup>2</sup> of his experiences in Kluski's séance-room. He says: 'The most frequent visitors of the animal variety are squirrels, dogs, and cats. On one occasion a lion appeared and on another a large bird like a hawk or buzzard. I have seen the two first-mentioned. They behaved in a perfectly natural way . . . the dog running about, wagging his tail, jumping on the laps and licking the faces of the sitters.'

One can read all about Kluski's 'lion' in Geley's *L'Ectoplasmie et la Clairvoyance*.<sup>3</sup> This animal is sometimes rather menacing, beating his tail and striking the furniture. On one occasion the frightened sitters, unable to control the animal, broke up the séance by waking the medium, 'who was deeply entranced.' Professor Pawlowski states in his article that 'the buzzard flew around, beating his wings against the walls and ceiling, and when he finally settled on the shoulder of the medium he was photographed with a magnesium flash.' This picture can be seen in Geley's book, which I have cited.

A frequent visitor to the Kluski séances is an animal which, for want of a better name, is called a 'Pithecanthropus.' He appears only in darkness and looks like a hairy man or a huge ape. His face is hairy, but his forehead is high; he has long, strong arms and behaves rather roughly towards the sitters, trying to lick their hands and faces and his gambols usually end in the sitters terminating the séance,

<sup>1</sup> May-June and July-August, 1921. See also *Journal*, Am. S.P.R., September, 1925.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Mediumship of Franek Kluski,' *Journal*, Am. S.P.R., New York, September, 1925, pp. 481-504.

<sup>3</sup> Paris, 1924. Eng. trans. *Clairvoyance and Materialization*, London, 1927.

as he is almost uncontrollable. He is said to exude the odour of a 'wet dog.' A full account of the Pithecanthropus can be read in Geley's book, and the history of Kluski's mediumship has been recorded in Polish by Norbert Okołowicz.<sup>1</sup> His mediumship is unsatisfactory from the point of view that no scientific body has investigated the alleged miracles. On each of my two visits to Warsaw I attempted to obtain sittings with Kluski, without results.

I have now recorded the work of most of the best physical mediums of the past fifty years. Some well-known ones, such as Lucia Šordi, Madame d'Espérance, Cecil Husk, Ada Bessinet, Valiantine and Guzik we shall meet in another chapter. It will be noted that no mention is made of 'spirit photographers' for the simple reason that I consider the evidence for all spirit photographs entirely unsatisfactory, and all photographic mediums who have been tested under real scientific conditions have failed to produce abnormal pictures. But there is one phase of physical mediumship which must be mentioned, and that is luminous phenomena. The best authenticated case is that of

#### ANNA MONARO.

Anna is called the 'luminous woman of Pirano' and puzzled Italian scientists by emitting a glow of light from her chest as she slept. She was admitted to the hospital at Pirano, suffering from asthma, and the nurses at that institution declared that she 'glowed at night.' Professors Fabio Vitali, G. C. Trabacchi, and Sante de Sanctis conducted an intense investigation of her case and declared that the phenomena were real. Professor Vitali kindly sent me their official report.<sup>2</sup> After making the control conditions so severe that fraud of any kind was impossible, the scientists waited up night after night. Describing one occurrence, the report says: 'At 10.35 p.m., without any sound, there suddenly appeared a glow of bluish-white light, which appeared to come from the patient's chest and lit up her neck and face

<sup>1</sup> *Wspomnienia z Seansów z Medium Frankiem Kluskim*, Warsaw, 1926.

<sup>2</sup> *Sul Fenomeno di Pirano*, Roma, 1934.

so as to show up her features. The light threw no shadow. At the same time, the woman stirred uneasily in her sleep and moaned.' The phenomenon lasted for only a second, during which a photograph was taken. But nothing unusual was seen on the plate. The scientists were convinced that the phenomenon was real, but it may have been due to some obscure pathological cause.

## CHAPTER V

### THE SCHNEIDER BOYS—SHEET-ANCHOR OF PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

**B**RAUNAU-AM-INN; a charming frontier old-world village in what is now Greater Germany, is famous as the birthplace of three distinguished persons—Adolf Hitler, and Willi and Rudi Schneider, the Austrian physical mediums. Braunau lies on the Austrian bank of the River Inn, which here divides Bavaria from Oberösterreich.

For many years Herr Josef Schneider, a *Maschinensetzer* (linotype compositor), who lived over the little printing office in which he worked, strove hard to rear a large family of twelve children, among whom were Willi and Rudi. According to Kapitän Fritz Kogelnik, who has recorded<sup>1</sup> the history of the early days of the Schneider mediumship, the phenomena began when the family were amusing themselves one night with a ouija board. They discovered that 'requests to the intelligence operating the board were carried out even to the extent of the displacement of objects at the far side of the room, on demand. For example, in the early spring of 1919, Kogelnik attended a séance at the Schneiders' modest suite of rooms in the main street of Braunau, and during the course of these experiments Herr Schneider said: 'Olga, if you are here, go lift up the tablecloth at the front of the table.' 'Olga', it should be explained, was the name of 'control' or spirit entity supposed to be in charge of the proceedings. 'Olga' obliged, and the cloth was slowly raised from the table, though no mortal hand was near it, and this miracle was seen in a light 'strong enough to recognize distinctly every person in the room.' Willi was then fourteen years old, Rudi (who was not present) being aged eight. At that early period Willi did not go into trance,

<sup>1</sup> 'The Early Days of the Willi Schneider Mediumship,' Am. S.P.R., *Journal*, March, 1926.

but was merely an amused and puzzled witness of the proceedings.

Kogelnik was convinced of the genuineness of the phenomena and attended some hundreds of séances with Willi, at which many telekinetic phenomena and materialized limbs were seen, under good conditions of control. I know Kogelnik well and his word can be trusted, even if he was sometimes mistaken in interpreting the various things he saw. Kapitän Kogelnik is a retired commander of an Austrian warship, in receipt of a small income as Collector of Customs in Braunau.

#### 'OLGA' MATERIALIZES

Miracles were such a novelty in Braunau that the advent of 'Olga' speedily led to much excitement in the village and sensational stories in the local Press. Crowds of phenomena-hunters besieged Herr Schneider's humble dwelling, and the manifestations became fewer. Also, according to Kogelnik, Willi began to 'help' the phenomena: 'During this period I caught him tricking several times'<sup>1</sup> and the Kapitän persuaded Willi's father to permit him to take the boy to his own flat, where better séance conditions could be imposed. Under these conditions, and with only Frau Kogelnik, the Kapitän, and two lady friends present, Willi produced the first of the very few full-form materializations recorded with this medium: 'In the middle of the room a sofa was placed, and adjoining it three chairs, so as to give the general effect of a circle. The room was lighted by a red lamp, hanging from the ceiling. On a table near me was placed a phonograph. Willi was comfortably seated on the left corner of the sofa; at his right was my wife, whom he liked best of all. She took both his hands, and after about one minute he was in deep trance. His head sank on to her left shoulder. I asked: "Olga, are you here?" A slight tapping of the medium's foot answered, "Yes." I continued: "I know, Olga, that you are very fond of music. Would

<sup>1</sup> Am. S.P.R. *Journal*, March, 1926, p. 152. For a photograph of Willi tricking, see *Bulletin IV*, Nat. Lab. Psychical Research, London, 1933, Plate XXII.

you perhaps like to materialize yourself and dance a tango?" "Olga" agreed, with the same tapping of Willi's foot. The phonograph was ready to play; I only had to throw the lever. I did so; and at the first note of the music a phantom was visible, standing among us. It danced the tango very correctly and gracefully. It was about five feet tall, and one got the impression of a slim figure, covered all over with cobwebby veils. As the dance proceeded these veils waved about, and I leaned back in my chair as they nearly touched me. It was a most impressive sight; the gracefully and mutely dancing phantom, while the medium lay in my wife's arms, absolutely motionless. At the last note of the music the phantom disappeared like lightning, just as it had come.<sup>1</sup> It will be noted that Willi was in a trance, which was unusual. But one day Kogelnik introduced another medium into the Schneider circle at his flat. This person fell into a trance during a sitting, much to the surprise of Willi, who promptly became entranced, too.

#### CONVINCING EXPERIMENTS AT MUNICH

It was not long before Baron von Schrenck-Notzing heard of the Braunau séances and he visited the Schneider *ménage* on many occasions. Finally, he persuaded Herr Schneider to permit him to take Willi under his care and have him trained for the dental profession. This was agreed to and the boy went to reside in the Bavarian capital. Under laboratory conditions in Schrenck's own mansion Willi rapidly developed his famous phenomena, which are the most *impressive* (taking into consideration the conditions under which they were produced) of any physical medium of whom we have any full record.

Schrenck invited distinguished savants and scientists from all over Europe to witness the boy's manifestations and more than one hundred testified to the fact that they believed the phenomena genuine. A list of these has been published.<sup>2</sup> Many writers and others were also convinced and Thomas

<sup>1</sup> Kogelnik, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-3.

<sup>2</sup> *Revue Métaphysique*, Paris, November-December, 1922, pp. 385-6.

Mann has written<sup>1</sup> a graphic account of his own experiences with Willi.

In May, 1922, Dr. E. J. Dingwall and I visited Munich at the invitation of Baron von Schrenck-Notzing in order to witness Willi's phenomena and to point out any trickery, if we discovered it. We were told that we could control the séances in any way we pleased, and the only condition was that we were to give Schrenck a written report of our opinion, whether this was good or bad.

Our first séance was held at Schrenck's residence in the Max Josefstrasse on Monday, May 29, 1922, in a room he had turned into a laboratory with the traditional 'cabinet' formed by a pair of curtains suspended across one corner of the room, in front of which was a 'cage,' resembling a large meat safe, with gauze panels. The doors of the cage were locked, with the only opening (about three feet wide by six inches deep) turned towards the cabinet opening and *away* from the medium. The circle was composed of seven sitters, who held hands in chain formation, and the medium was controlled by two persons, one of whom held his two wrists. In addition to this tactual control, just previous to the séance we had carefully examined the medium and had dressed him in one-piece tights, studded with luminous pins. This fore-control was the usual procedure.

For illumination, we used five red electric lights in a cluster, regulated by a rheostat. The amount of light was fair and I could plainly see my neighbours in the circle.

Having completed our examination of room and medium, we took our places in the circle, switched off the white light, and the séance began (at 8.35 p.m.) The first thing we heard was the creaking of a heavy table, weighing thirty-three pounds, which had been placed *inside* the large gauze cage. A portion of it had been made luminous and we could see—and hear—the table bumping up and down. Then Schrenck placed a large heavy musical-box on the table, inside the cage, and this *wound itself up*, and stopped and started at words of command in three languages. It, too, bumped up and down. A small luminous hand-bell was

<sup>1</sup> 'An Experience in the Occult,' in *Three Essays*, New York, 1929. (From the original German edition: *Okkulte Erlebnisse*, Berlin, 1925.)



then placed in the cage. It soon afterwards rang and twice was thrown out of the cage. Later, a small table (on which were a luminous plaque and luminous bracelet) was placed on a larger one in front of the cabinet. The bracelet was waved in the air, and the table thrown over, being afterwards passed completely round the large one on which it stood. Extra red lights were used for this phenomenon. Occasionally, we asked 'Mina,' Willi's trance personality, to produce certain results, and this was done. 'Mina,' by the way, had by this time supplanted 'Olga,' Willi's original 'control.'

During this portion of the sitting a white handkerchief was dropped on the floor; it shortly rose in the air, the effect of the red light on the rising handkerchief against the black background being very striking. Then a whitish hand-like form or 'pseudopod' appeared at the opening of the cabinet and the séance terminated.

Both Dingwall and I were much impressed by what we had seen and heard. Two days later (May 31) we made a further and minute examination of Schrenck's séance-room. We examined and moved all the furniture, cabinet, and apparatus. We sounded floor, walls, and ceiling. Everything was normal.

At subsequent séances we experienced similar manifestations and left Munich with the conviction that Willi was 'genuine.' Speaking personally, I was very deeply impressed, as it was the first medium through whom I had witnessed phenomena under unimpeachable conditions.<sup>1</sup> Following our Munich experiments, Willi was invited to London by the S.P.R. and a number of séances was held. A few striking telekinetic phenomena were witnessed, but the visit was not particularly successful.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For a full account of these séances, see my 'Convincing Phenomena at Munich,' in *Psyche*, London, April, 1923.

<sup>2</sup> See *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. XXXVI, pp. 1-33.

## THE LEVITATION THAT FAILED

Soon after my return from Munich, events occurred which terminated in Schrenck and Willi parting company. The boy went to Vienna where his mediumship was developed by Dr. E. Holub, *Chefarzt* of the Steinhof asylum. It was stated that a new phenomenon—levitation—had been witnessed. Holub's sudden death found Willi at a loose end and his widow offered the youth a home in her flat. The experiments were continued and in April, 1925, I was invited to take part in them.

The séances were held in Frau Doktor Holub's flat and the first I attended was on June 6, 1925. The sitters were Frau Holub and myself. No 'cabinet' was used, and it was a very informal séance, the chief purpose of which was to introduce me to 'Otto,' Willi's latest 'control' or trance personality. No phenomena were witnessed, except that 'Otto' said he was pleased to see me!

The next experiments were held on June 8, and among the sitters were Professors Thirring and Ludwik of Vienna University. A two-sided gauze screen, twenty-eight inches high, was placed round a strong wooden oblong table, on which was a cloth. The screen was between the medium and table, on which were placed various articles, including a rubber squeaking doll. A sitter and I controlled Willi, who had been examined and was dressed in a two-piece pyjama suit, to which were sewn luminous buttons. In a few minutes Willi was in trance, and by the light of a red lamp (by means of which all the sitters could see one another) the following phenomena were experienced: the tablecloth was lifted; the table was moved, and swung round; the luminous rubber doll squeaked several times (proving that something was pressing it); the table turned completely over on to the sitters. These manifestations were witnessed several times. The 'doll' phenomenon was particularly striking. Willi was five feet eleven inches from it, the other sitters being more than six feet from the toy. No doubt exists in my mind that we witnessed genuine phenomena, during the production of which Willi was breathing heavily and

rapidly (200 cycles per minute), a trance condition peculiar to both Willi and Rudi.

The next séance was held on June 11 and 'Otto' promised that he would levitate the medium. He did not keep his word. Under rigid conditions the boy attempted this phenomenon but he did not succeed in raising himself from the two stools which supported his head and feet respectively.<sup>1</sup> In December, 1924, in London, I had witnessed a similar attempt at levitation and that, too, failed.

#### MIRACLES AT BRAUNAU

Very soon after my visit to Vienna Schrenck and Willi became friends once more, and the youth signed a two years' contract with the Baron, who undertook to continue experiments. I was unaware of this fact when, in October, 1925, I arranged to hold some séances with both Willi and Rudi Schneider in their home at Braunau-am-Inn. With two friends I motored the ninety miles from Munich to Braunau, where we arrived on October 31, 1925, and that same evening we had our first sitting. We found the Schneiders a delightful, typical *kleinbürgerlich* family, modest and kindly. Rudi, unfortunately, was in bed with a poisoned leg (which we examined) and could not walk. At this period of the Schneider history, Rudi had already become known as a medium and, very strangely, had appropriated Willi's cast-off 'control,' 'Olga,' as his trance personality; or, if the reader is a spiritualist, 'spirit guide.'

The Schneiders' séance-room was, in fact, their principal living-room, and we examined it minutely. It was more than thirty feet long and eleven feet wide, with two double windows overlooking the main street, twenty-two feet below. A pair of light curtains were suspended from the ceiling across a corner of the room, enclosing one of the windows, and these served to form the familiar 'cabinet.'

I arranged two séances in the Schneider home, each being divided into two portions. Among the sitters were Pro-

<sup>1</sup> For a full account of the Vienna experiments, see my 'An Account of Some Further Experiments with Willy Schneider,' *Journal, Am. S.P.R.*, August, 1925.

fessors Karl Gruber and Hildebrand, who had journeyed specially from Munich to assist at the experiments.

I regret that space will not permit my giving a detailed account of all the wonders we witnessed at Braunau, but the following were amongst the phenomena which I recorded during or immediately after the séances, held under perfect conditions of control of the medium: swaying and billowing curtains; cool breezes; telekinetic movements of handkerchief, lamp, bell, fan, and other objects; the appearance of pseudopods, or hand-like 'terminals,' stumps, and fully-materialized hand; tug-of-war with handkerchief, between the 'hand' and sitters, etc. These manifestations were repeated time after time, giving the sitters ample opportunity to study the conditions of control during the actual appearance of the phenomena. The two professors, Willi and I, adjourned to a nearby café after the last séance, which we agreed was the best the medium had ever given under test conditions. That was my last sitting with Willi.<sup>1</sup>

#### BRAUNAU REVISITED

We hear little of Willi Schneider after my séances with him at Braunau. He worked hard at his dental studies, and his mediumship became a secondary consideration. This was the less regrettable as his brother Rudi was rapidly developing into a first-class physical medium, with similar phenomena and trance technique to those of Willi. Baron von Schrenck-Notzing wrote to me from time to time, sending information about the boy whom (as in the case of Willi) he had more or less 'adopted.' I decided to test Rudi for myself and to this end arrived in Braunau on April 28, 1926. I was accompanied by two hard-headed business friends and Mr. E. Clephan Palmer, a journalist on the staff of the *Daily News*. Mr. Palmer possessed a considerable knowledge of psychical research and had been impressed with the mediumship of Stella C.

We had two séances with Rudi, both divided into the

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed account of these experiments, see my 'Brilliant Phenomena in the Home of the Schneiders,' *Journal*, Am. S.P.R., January, 1926.

usual two portions. The sittings were again held in the Schneiders' principal living-room, and the lighting and other conditions were identical as with Willi, except that there were now four of us to control the medium, family and room. The phenomena we witnessed were almost identical with those experienced with Willi a few months previously: telekinetic movements, cold breezes, materialized limbs (we saw a half-formed hand drag a bell off a table); pseudopods playing with handkerchief ('Mr. Palmer places his handkerchief on table . . . and immediately a small, perfectly-formed hand, but with four fingers only, shoots out of cabinet and snatches the handkerchief'<sup>1</sup>); knocks, raps, thumps, etc. Rudi's mediumship much impressed us and we should have continued the experiments except for the fact that a general strike had occurred in London (necessitating Mr. Palmer's immediate return), and I was due at Vienna in order to investigate Eleonore Zugun. On his return to London Mr. Palmer wrote a series of articles in the *Daily News*<sup>2</sup> describing our experiences and admitted that he 'could imagine no means by which the phenomena could have been fraudulently produced.'

#### CHARGES OF FRAUD

Our visit to Braunau, and the subsequent positive reports by Mr. Palmer and myself, caused much interest in both this country and America and a stream of 'investigators' began to flow towards the large village by the Inn. Apparently, by this time, Dr. E. J. Dingwall (who was so impressed with the Willi séances when he accompanied me to Munich in May, 1922<sup>3</sup>) had formulated a theory that, in the Schneider home at any rate, the phenomena were due to confederacy—a sort of *Familienangelegenheit*, or family affair. This hypothesis would not, obviously, cover the conditions obtaining outside the Schneiders' home when the family was not

<sup>1</sup> From verbatim notes, in my account of the experiments: 'The Phenomena of Rudi Schneider,' *Journal, Am. S.P.R.*, November, 1926.

<sup>2</sup> May 18, 19, 20, 21, 1926. See also his book, *The Riddle of Spiritualism*, London [1927].

<sup>3</sup> See *ante*.

present. To test this new theory Dingwall, accompanied by an American journalist named W. J. Vinton, visited (August, 1926) Braunau and had a number of sittings with both Willi and Rudi. In his report<sup>1</sup> Vinton charges the whole family with conspiring to produce false phenomena. He admits that he supplied Herr Schneider with 'unlimited beer'<sup>2</sup> and 'led him on.'<sup>3</sup> Though the usual manifestations were witnessed, Vinton did *not* detect any fraud. In the same year Dr. W. F. Prince, of the Boston S.P.R., had several sittings with Rudi at Stuttgart and Braunau and endorsed the 'confederacy by invasion of the cabinet' theory. But he, too, discovered no fraud.<sup>4</sup> About this period J. Malcolm Bird had one séance at Braunau on October 11, 1927. He, too, accepted the Dingwall-Vinton-Prince hypothesis of family confederacy, but, also like these gentlemen, discovered no actual evidence of fraud on the part of anyone.<sup>5</sup>

#### THE ELECTRICAL CONTROL

During the stormy period when Rudi's mediumship was being so passionately discussed, Schrenck was, apparently, witnessing good phenomena at Munich under perfect conditions of control—that is, tactual control. But the criticisms levelled against the boy prompted him to look around for some form of mechanical or electrical controlling method which would eliminate the human factor. He found such a method in an idea which I had submitted to him some years previously. I had sent him plans of what I called an 'electric chair.' This was an arm-chair with electrical contacts at every point touched by the medium's anatomy. Head, arms, feet, seat, hands, etc., were all in contact with electric light circuits: when a hand, foot, etc., was *not* in contact, a small red signal light would automatically switch off and the lack of control would at once be discovered.

<sup>1</sup> 'The Famous Schneider Mediumship,' *Psyche*, London, April, 1927.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>4</sup> 'Experiments with Physical Mediums in Europe,' *Bulletin VII*, Boston S.P.R., 1928.

<sup>5</sup> See his 'A Detailed Account of my Séance with Rudi,' *Journal*, Am. S.P.R. August, 1929, pp. 407-27.

Schrenck improved on this idea by making the medium and controllers wear metallic socks and gloves which formed part of an electric light circuit. If a hand or foot of medium or controller were not in proper contact, the tell-tale light would be extinguished. Schrenck and Karl Krall arranged to have a long series of sittings in their respective laboratories, using this tactual-electrical control—a control which was to silence the critics for ever. But Fate decreed otherwise: the early weeks of 1929 witnessed the sudden deaths of both Krall and Schrenck and German psychical research received a shock from which it has never recovered.

#### RUDI COMES TO LONDON

Immediately I heard of the deaths of the two principal German psychists I hurried to Munich in order to arrange with Rudi to continue Schrenck's experiments in London. He arrived at my laboratory on April 11, 1929, the first séance being held on the following evening.

For my experiments in London I still further improved the tactual-electrical control by providing *all* the sitters, controllers and medium with metallic gloves and socks forming part of an electric light circuit. These gloves, etc., were securely taped on and could *not* be removed during a séance without instant detection. Unless a sitter tightly clasped the hands of his neighbour, or kept his feet in firm contact with the metallic plates screwed to the floor, one of six lights was extinguished, instantly revealing the faulty control. Before each séance Rudi was thoroughly examined and donned our special suit. Thermal data, pulse-rate, respiration, etc., were recorded as a matter of routine.

During Rudi's first visit to London we held five séances and witnessed the most brilliant and convincing phenomena under unimpeachable conditions. These will be described later.

## RUDI'S SECOND LONDON VISIT

The success of Rudi's first visit to London was so great that I was pressed by those scientists and others who had seen the boy to organize another series of séances. This I did and Rudi again visited London on November 14, 1929, remaining until the following January 30. We held twenty-one séances and again witnessed the most varied and brilliant phenomena, using the electrical control of sitters, medium, etc. As my principal aim in psychic matters is to convince orthodoxy of the reality of certain phenomena, the following scientists attended at my invitation: Lord Rayleigh, Professor A. O. Rankine, Dr. William Brown, Professor F. C. S. Schiller, Professor A. F. C. Pollard, Dr. C. E. M. Joad, and Professor Nils von Hofsten, of Uppsala.

## THE LONDON PHENOMENA

Whatever may have happened in the boy's home at Braunau, it is quite obvious that the 'invasion of the cabinet by the Schneider family' theory could not be applied to the London séances, and we heard little more of this suggestion. The following is a list of the phenomena we experienced, under conditions of control never previously imposed on any medium or sitters in the history of psychical research:

Floating, levitation, and intelligent movements of many objects such as waste-paper basket, toy zither, etc.; the tying of knots in handkerchief; writing on paper by pseudopod or 'terminal'; billowing of the curtains; raps and knocks on table, chairs, etc., both inside and outside of cabinet, at command; production of teleplasmic masses resembling arms, legs, a 'snow-man,' 'childlike form,' etc., some luminous and all showing volition and intelligence; apparent fall in temperature of cabinet, cool breezes, winds, etc.; taps felt by sitters, and gentle tugs at their clothing; cognition of objects whose whereabouts were unknown to the sitters. Most of the above phenomena were witnessed in the light of



a sixty-watt red lamp, by ninety-nine sitters, twenty-one of whom assisted at controlling the medium.<sup>1</sup>

#### PARIS EXPERIMENTS

After leaving London, Rudi, at my suggestion, placed himself at the disposal of the Institut Métapsychique, Paris, where he remained for fifteen months. The electrical control was not used there, the sitters relying on the old tactual control for immobilizing the medium. Most of the séances appear to have been held for studying telekinetic phenomena and in order to 'control' the objects to be moved, the experimenters utilized the well-known system of directing the rays from the infra-red end of the spectrum through a filter on to a photo-electric cell, which is a method of measuring the amount of energy in a beam of light. When the beam is obstructed (and the amount of interference can be measured by suitable instruments), a relay comes into operation, an electrical circuit is closed, and the current can, of course, be utilized in a variety of ways, such as firing a magnesium flash (for taking photographs) or ringing a bell. The photo-electric cell has been much used commercially for automatic lighting and extinguishing of street lamps, self-opening doors, etc.

The infra-red installation at the Institut was a very elaborate and costly one, but its chief drawback was that the beam was quite open and unprotected, and though it guarded the object to be operated upon, it did *not* guard the medium or the sitters. If the medium was able surreptitiously to release a hand or foot, and intercept the rays in any way, or if any sitter did the same thing, of course it would have the same effect on the beam and on the recording instruments as if a psychic body had obstructed it.

In due course, the report<sup>2</sup> of the Paris experiments was published and the investigators claimed that they had discovered the existence of an invisible 'something'—a psychic

<sup>1</sup> For a full illustrated report of these London experiments, see the present writer's *Rudi Schneider*, London, 1930.

<sup>2</sup> *Les Pouvoirs Inconnus de l'Esprit sur la Matière*, by Eugène and Marcel Osty Paris, 1932. For a criticism of this report, see *Nature*, June 25, 1932.

'force,' 'energy,' or 'power' externalized by the medium, which affected the infra-red rays, 30 per cent of which were absorbed by the alleged psychic emanations. The report was packed with graphs and diagrams—all very impressive, assuming that every precaution had been taken against fraud, mal-observation, and experimental error.

#### LAST EXPERIMENTS IN BRAUNAU

I was so struck with the alleged discovery of the psychic emanations that I decided I would endeavour to duplicate the experiments of the French investigators. To this end, a party of four from the National Laboratory of Psychical Research journeyed to Braunau in order to make arrangements for the proposed visit. While we were there, we decided to test the theory that the Schneider family sometimes 'helped' the phenomena. We took special precautions against any such 'invasion' of the cabinet or circle. We had three séances with Rudi. The first was almost negative, the second was very good, the third was brilliant. On this, my fifth visit to the Inn village, my party was large enough to control effectively such members of the Schneider family as were permitted to be present, and any local sitters thought necessary. Stories were current that Vater Schneider with a reaching-rod, Mutter Schneider with a 'hold-out,' and various small grandchildren with black tights, black masks—and blacker hearts—crawling between the sitters' legs, were responsible for the phenomena.

So at our last—and best—sitting (July 31, 1931) we screwed up every door and window in the séance room and attached our seals. We dismissed most of the local sitters, locked and sealed Herr Schneider in his bedroom and put surgical plaster over the keyhole. We permitted only three of the usual circle to remain in the séance room. As there were five of us (a friend had arrived at Braunau at the last moment) we could easily control the three local sitters by sandwiching them between us. The medium, the room, and every sitter were thus under our own complete control:

I repeat that this last séance was brilliant. A large

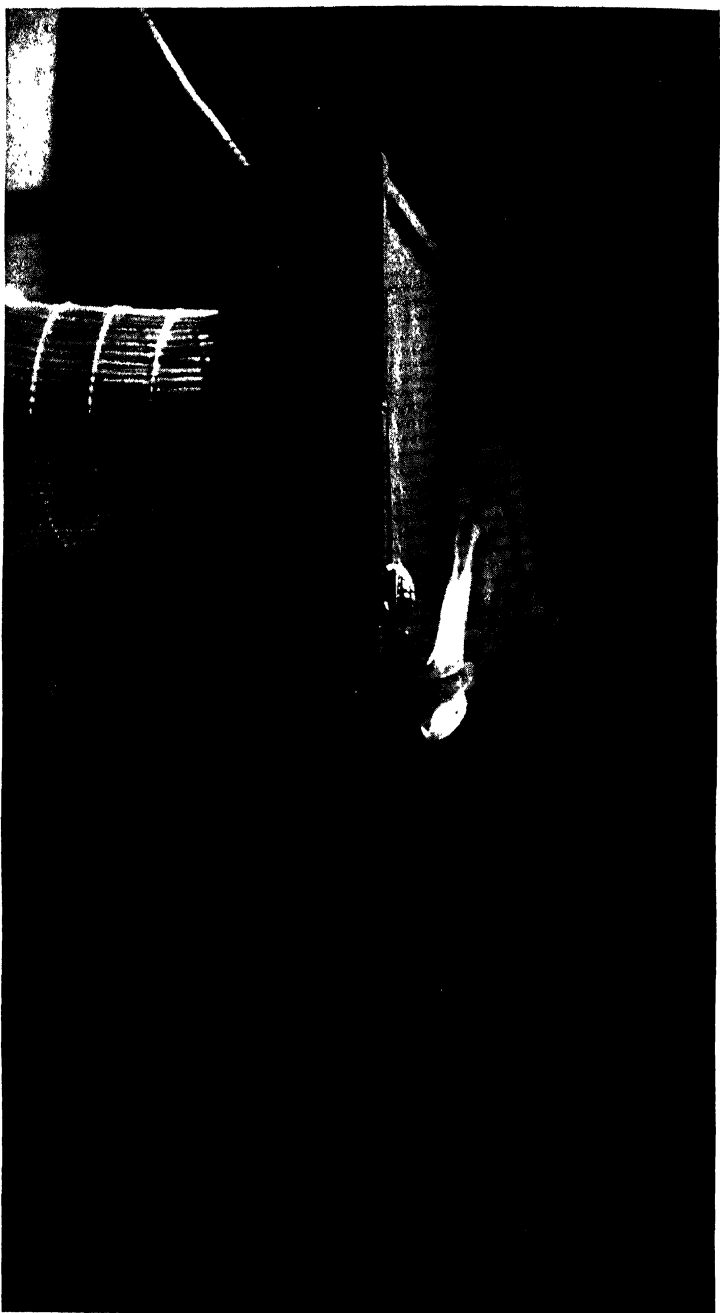
enamelled bowl of water was levitated and slowly revolved; water was splashed over the sitters; knocks on the séance table and window were given to order; curtains were flung out over the sitters; table was dragged into cabinet; Mrs. Goldney's handkerchief was picked up from the table, tightly knotted in one corner, and with a large rent made in it; a small 'hand' or pseudopod picked a handkerchief off the floor, and several sitters claimed to have seen a teleplasmic mass resembling a snow-man. It was all very impressive and silenced once and for all those who asserted that the phenomena witnessed in the Schneider home were due entirely to confederacy. We signed Herr Schneider's protocol book to this effect.<sup>1</sup>

#### RUDI'S THIRD LONDON VISIT

When in Braunau, we accomplished our mission of persuading Rudi to visit London again in order that we could test the psychic emanations alleged to have been discovered in Paris. In all, he gave us twenty-seven séances, the first of which was held on February 9, 1932. Because we wished to use a number of special instruments, automatic cameras, infra-red apparatus, etc., we were compelled to revert to the old tactual control (hand-in-hand chain formation) of medium and sitters.

Generally speaking, the séances were poor, many being negative. We experienced no phenomena comparable with those we saw in the 1929-30 London sittings, or in Rudi's own home, and it was evident that the boy's powers were weakening. We improved on the Paris infra-red ray installation by enclosing everything in a gauze cage. The apparatus was home-made and, though the beam was affected, this was afterwards thought due to experimental error or faulty construction. A very sensitive professional infra-red ray set-up, erected by Major C. E. Prince of Radiovisor (Parent) Ltd., failed to detect a trace of interference by Rudi's alleged emanations.

<sup>1</sup> For text, see *Journal*, Am. S.P.R., April, 1933, p. 59.



Telekinetic climbing into space of handkerchief after displacement from counterpoise table, automatically photographed at séance with Rudi Schneider, March 3, 1932.



Crude 'teleplasmic hand' exuding from navel, photographed at séance with 'Margery', in Boston, Mass., 1925.

## A DAMNING PHOTOGRAPH

One of the pieces of special apparatus which I constructed was a counterpoise table in the automatic camera circuit. If an object (such as a handkerchief) was placed on one side of the table, and it was displaced by any means, normal or paranormal, the other side of the table would fall owing to the counterpoise, close the electric flash-bulb circuit, and a number of cameras would automatically photograph—if photographable—whatever had displaced the object.

In practice, we used a large handkerchief on the table and some striking pictures of the levitated handkerchief were secured (see Plate III). But some photographs which were automatically taken at the twenty-fifth séance on April 28, 1932, show that Rudi had managed to free his arm from the—admittedly—unsatisfactory tactual control, and it was quite clear that, on this occasion at least, Rudi had managed to pluck the handkerchief off the table, the camera catching his outstretched arm before he could get it in control again. Because of the possibility of evading control revealed by these damning photographs, many of the phenomena recorded at this last series of London séances must be regarded as suspect. The publication<sup>1</sup> of the photographs started a controversy which was as futile as it was acrimonious. But Rudi has often been accused of freeing an arm (or attempting to do so) by several people, including Professors Stefan Meyer and Karl Przibram of Vienna University.<sup>2</sup> The publication of our report made psychists realize that Rudi's star was waning, and that the boy was losing his mediumistic faculty. This was especially apparent to those who took part in the 1932 experiments, the sitters including Professor W. E. Gibbs, Dr. Guy B. Brown, Dr. William Brown, Dr. C. E. M. Joad, Professor H. F. Fraser-Harris, Sir Henry Simpson, Professor J. Alexander Gunn, Mr. Aldous Huxley, and Professor Julian Huxley.

<sup>1</sup> 'An Account of some Further Experiments with Rudi Schneider,' by Harry Price, London, 1933. (*Bulletin IV*, Nat. Lab. Psychical Research.)

<sup>2</sup> For their reports, see *Bulletin V*, Nat. Lab. Psychical Research, London, 1933.

## THE S.P.R. TESTS RUDI

There is little more to be said concerning Rudi Schneider. Just four and a half years after I brought the boy to London, the S.P.R. arranged a long series of séances with him. The result of these last London experiments can be summed up in a very few words. Fifty-five sittings were held, and not a single phenomenon was recorded during the six months (1933-4) the boy was under examination. No evidence was forthcoming that he could externalize any psychic 'power' or 'force,' and the Paris infra-red absorption claims were nullified.

## RUDI'S TRANCE BREATHING NORMAL

One interesting fact emerged from the S.P.R. experiments. A peculiarity of both the Schneider brothers' trance technique was a very quick and shallow breathing, accompanied by violent clonic spasms. This rapid respiration sometimes reached two hundred and sixty cycles per minute. It remained for Dr. C. G. Douglas, F.R.S., of Oxford, the authority on respiration, to prove that Rudi's trance breathing is absolutely normal, and no indication whatsoever as to the genuineness or otherwise of the trance. Samples of the medium's breath were collected (during trance) in Douglas bags and analysed. It was found that the oxygen consumption corresponded to a man walking four miles an hour. As the boy was always in violent motion during trance, this oxygen consumption was in no way excessive. Several people have since imitated Rudi's trance breathing normally.<sup>1</sup>

And so ends the story of the Schneider boys—by far the most brilliant mediums of whom we have any record. No physical medium in the annals of psychical research has produced such good phenomena under such rigid conditions of control as the Schneider boys. It is a thousand pities that orthodoxy did not take the boys in hand when their psychic faculties were most pronounced. Both Schrenck and I did

<sup>1</sup> For a report of the S.P.R. sittings, see *Proceedings*, Vol. XLII, Part 137, 1934.

our best to interest the scientists, and more than two hundred savants have testified to, or witnessed, the manifestations. Lord Rayleigh, who first saw Rudi in my séance-room in 1929, considers that the genuineness of certain of his phenomena has been proved.<sup>1</sup> Many other scientists have come to the same conclusion, and, so far as physical phenomena are concerned, the Schneider boys are the sheet-anchor of psychical research.

<sup>1</sup> 'Presidential Address,' *Proceedings*, S.P.R., Part 152, Vol. XLV, London, January, 1938.



## CHAPTER VI

### 'MARGERY': THE PSYCHIC RIDDLE OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

**D**URING the last seventy years, two physical mediums of outstanding versatility share the honour of providing for psychical researchers puzzles apparently quite incapable of solution. They are D. D. Home, the enigma of the nineteenth century, and Mrs. Le Roy Goddard Crandon, known to psychists under her pseudonym of 'Margery.' The mediumship of Home is not within the scope of the present work, but Margery is still with us, even if she is not before the public to the same extent as formerly.

Mina Crandon is the wife of Dr. L. R. G. Crandon, a distinguished surgeon and Harvard lecturer of Boston, Mass. She was born near Toronto, where she was educated. She had a brother, Walter Stinson, who was killed in a railway accident in 1911. It was he who subsequently became Margery's 'control' or 'spirit guide.'

It is not quite clear when Margery's mediumship became apparent, but, rather curiously, the public first heard of her indirectly through my exposure<sup>1</sup> of William Hope, the fraudulent 'spirit photographer.' Following this exposure, the *Scientific American* offered<sup>2</sup> a prize of \$2,500 to the first person who could produce a spirit photograph under laboratory conditions, with especial reference to Hope. The same journal also announced that it would give a similar prize to any medium who could produce 'a visible psychic manifestation' under test conditions. Later,<sup>3</sup> the *Scientific American* invited Hope to undergo the test, promising to pay all his expenses to New York and back. He refused. A similar invitation was also extended to other psychics, the

<sup>1</sup> *Journal*, S.P.R., London, May, 1922.

<sup>2</sup> December, 1922.

<sup>3</sup> April, 1924.

editor remarking that 'it applies specifically to an American lady of very large mediumistic repute who sincerely seeks anonymity.' This lady was 'Margery' Crandon.

Margery decided to enter the contest and a Committee was formed to test her and any other mediums who were bold enough to come forward for this purpose. The Committee consisted of Professor William McDougall (who had already experimented with Margery in 1923); Dr. Daniel Frost Comstock; 'Harry Houdini' (Ehrich Weiss), the conjurer; Dr. Walter Franklin Prince, of the American S.P.R.; and Hereward Carrington. J. Malcolm Bird (an Associate Editor of the *Scientific American*) was secretary to the Committee.

#### THE 'SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN' INQUIRY

What phenomena were the *Scientific American* Committee going to test? According to Dr. Crandon himself,<sup>1</sup> Margery was at this time producing the following manifestations: Raps, which answered questions through an arranged code; 'pale, non-radiant, non-illuminating psychic lights'; scents, of many odours; the music of chimes, bugles, clock-bells, and other instruments, though none was present; 'trance-writing in nine languages,' though Margery was not a linguist; telekinetic movements of light and heavy objects, such as furniture; the passage of matter through matter, demonstrating the 'fourth dimension' of space; the apport of roses and a live pigeon; the direct independent voice of 'Walter,' Margery's 'control;' the production of teleplasm (which could be touched), materializations and 'pseudo-pods,' which handled objects in a red light. Dr. Crandon tells us that 'the identity of several discarnate relatives of the people about the table was made out.'

The above were some of the phenomena which Margery was producing in her home when the *Scientific American* inquiry began, so the hopes of the Committee ran high that the anonymous medium would win the \$2,500. Many séances were held but none of the Committee appears to

<sup>1</sup> 'The "Margery" Mediumship,' article in the *Journal* of the Am. S.P.R., March, 1925, pp. 114-5.

have been impressed by what was witnessed, except perhaps Bird and Carrington. The usual dissensions between the investigators occurred, and McDougall, Bird and Carrington withdrew from the Committee. Houdini, Prince and Comstock attempted to reach a decision concerning the mediumship and they, too, failed. What finally smashed the investigation was the finding during a séance of a carpenter's folding rule in a special strong wooden cabinet made by Houdini in order to test the medium. Margery was immobilized in the cabinet when 'Walter' suddenly shrieked out that Houdini had placed a two-foot rule under the cushion on which her feet were resting. The rule was found, but it was never proved whether Houdini put it there in order to incriminate the medium, or if Margery secreted it so that she could accuse Houdini of trying to ruin her. That was the rather exciting—and unsatisfactory—end, of the *Scientific American* inquiry,<sup>1</sup> and Margery did *not* receive the \$2,500. Neither did Josie K. Stewart, Mrs. Thompson, Valiantine, or Nino Pecoraro, four other mediums who entered the contest.

#### THE BRITISH INQUIRY

The *Scientific American* fiasco was the means of bringing Margery to the notice of psychical researchers all over the world. Previous to the investigation, Dr. and Mrs. Crandon had visited Paris and London (Christmas, 1923) and had given sittings there. A few people, including Conan Doyle, were impressed by what they saw and heard; others remained sceptical. After the Houdini squabble, the London S.P.R., through its Research Officer, Dr. E. J. Dingwall, arranged with Dr. Crandon that his wife should be tested in Boston. An impressive document was drawn up and it was agreed<sup>2</sup> that the 'name "Walter," as applied to the personality which manifests in the séance-room, purports to be the deceased brother of the medium, and operates as the "spirit

<sup>1</sup> For Houdini's account of the affair, see *Houdini Exposes the Tricks Used by the Boston Medium 'Margery'*, New York, 1924.

<sup>2</sup> For full text, see *Journal, Am. S.P.R.*, New York, 1925, Vol. XIX, pp. 116-17.

control." Dingwall agreed that neither he nor his agents would switch on any light, except with the consent of 'Walter'; that Crandon could not be excluded from any séance without his (Crandon's) consent; and that no sitter could be introduced to the séances without Crandon's approval.

Dingwall held many sittings with Margery during January and February, 1925, Professor William McDougall and Dr. Ellwood Worcester being among the observers. The phenomena witnessed were the usual 'Walter' voice, telekinetic movements of objects, hand-shaped materializations which appeared to exude from the various orifices of the medium's body, and so on. (Plate IV.) As regards the crude 'hands,' Professor McDougall's opinion<sup>1</sup> was that they were made from animal tissue, artificially manipulated to give them a crude resemblance to human hands. I have a large collection of lantern slides of these alleged teleplasmic extrusions and Professor McDougall (who held a medical degree) and I went through them on one occasion and the Professor pointed out to me the arteries, the annular bands corresponding to the cartilaginous rings of the trachea, the openings of small lateral arteries, lung, the omentum of a sheep, etc. Dingwall's investigation ended in dissension<sup>2</sup> among the investigators, as so often happens.

The London S.P.R. published Dr. Dingwall's report<sup>3</sup> in due course and it is a most interesting document. He states that Margery's mediumship is 'the most remarkable hitherto recorded,' and of great importance. Whether genuine or a vast hoax, it is still the most important. During the whole of this long report, Dingwall cannot say whether the mediumship is genuine or not. He says: 'I did not succeed in achieving my primary purpose, of coming to a definite conclusion as to the genuineness or otherwise of the phenomena. During the course of the [twenty-nine] sittings the evidence seemed to me at one time for, and at another time against, their supernormal nature, but never to incline decisively either way.' And so ended the British investiga-

<sup>1</sup> *Boston Transcript*, February 18, 1925.

<sup>2</sup> See *Journal*, Am. S.P.R., Vols. XIX, XX, 1925-6.

<sup>3</sup> *Proceedings*, S.P.R., London, June, 1926, Vol. XXXVI, Part 98.

tion, which was as inconclusive and unsatisfactory as that organized by the *Scientific American*.

### 'WALTER' LEAVES HIS THUMB-PRINTS

Margery is nothing if not versatile and the reader will have seen that she produced almost the entire gamut of phenomena, mental and physical, during the few years of her mediumship. One phase I have not mentioned, and that I will call 'plastic phenomena.' As far back as May 17, 1924, Margery produced 'psychic' gloves or moulds *à la* Kluski. They were not very successful and rather crude, and no one was particularly impressed. But in July, 1926, a determined effort was made to obtain prints of the extrusions or 'fingers' which, as we have seen, belonged to the crude materialized hands which were being seen—and felt—at Margery's séances. "'Walter" objected strongly to getting printer's ink or lampblack on his teleplasmic terminal,'<sup>1</sup> so—at 'Walter's' suggestion—a bucket of hot wax and a sheet of plate glass were tried. 'Walter' dipped his terminal in the wax and then pressed it on the glass. Skin markings could be seen, but they were not very good. Then 'Walter' suggested that the glass be covered with soft wax, and that he should press his finger upon it. Again, the markings were not very good. 'The procedure ultimately adopted flowed out of a suggestion by Margery's dentist, who is interested in the phenomena'<sup>2</sup> and the suggestion was that 'Kerr,' a proprietary brand of dental wax, which becomes plastic when warmed, should be used. This technique was successful—and a phenomenon, new to psychical research, was born. For the first time in the history of the occult, a spirit obligingly and permanently recorded his three-dimensional thumb-prints, at request.

The technique of securing the prints is as follows: Into a bowl of hot water is placed a slab of 'Kerr' which rests on the end of a napkin. This cloth trails over the side of the bowl into another bowl containing cold water. 'Walter's'

<sup>1</sup> *Journal*, Am. S.P.R., Vol. XXII, 1928, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

terminal, in complete darkness, pulls the soft 'Kerr' out of the hot water by tugging at the end of the cloth, presses his thumb 'terminal' on to the wax, continues the pulling of the cloth, which results in the 'Kerr' being deposited in the cold water, where it quickly hardens. Why the napkin is used is because it saves 'Walter' scalding his fingers in the hot water. It also prevents his getting his 'hands' wet. Photographs showing 'Walter's' hand (which appears to be extruded from the medium's vagina) making the print have been published.<sup>1</sup> By the time the thumb-print technique had been perfected, 'Walter' had improved the shape of his terminals considerably. The new fingers were much better to look at than the previous crude 'pseudopods' which, Professor McDougall maintained, were exactly like lumps of animal tissue carved into the resemblance of hands.

#### THE GREAT THUMB-PRINT SENSATION

With the perfecting of the plastic 'Kerr' technique, 'Walter' began to deposit his thumb-prints (left and right) at Margery's séances on both sides of the Atlantic. At a sitting I attended in London on December 7, 1929, 'Walter' kindly made one specially for me. These 'thumb-print' séances are always held in Stygian darkness, and I must admit that I was not impressed at what occurred at the séance I attended. Every alleged abnormal happening *could* have been produced normally by the medium, including 'Walter's' thumb-print, if Margery had secreted a small thumb-print die on her person. As a matter of fact, after one of these London séances, a piece of wax was found, bearing an imprint of the thumb of Margery, who was supposed to be so controlled as to be incapable of reaching the wax.<sup>2</sup>

Often at Margery's séances the sitters' finger-prints were taken in order to demonstrate that they were quite unlike the prints left by 'Walter.' One day it occurred to Mr.

<sup>1</sup> See *Leaves from a Psychist's Case-Book*, by Harry Price, London, 1933, Plate XXII.

<sup>2</sup> See *Proceedings*, S.P.R., Vol. XXXIX, pp. 358-68.

E. E. Dudley, a former officer of the American S.P.R., to ask every person who had ever sat with Margery to supply him with inked prints of his or her right and left thumbs. Carefully collating this mass of material with the 'Walter' prints, he was astounded to discover that the 'spirit's' thumb-prints, left and right, were *identical in every respect* with those of Margery's friend and dentist, 'Dr. Kerwin,' *who is still living!* In this report,<sup>1</sup> Mr. Dudley says: 'The identification of these patterns has been checked by five competent and unprejudiced experts, as well as by several laymen, who had not the slightest difficulty in satisfying themselves as to the identity. . . . In the right thumb-print the reader should be able to find approximately ninety identical minutiae, while nearly seventy can be counted in the left thumb-print . . . This means that there is not one chance in billions of billions that Kerwin's prints and the wax [Walter's'] prints did not belong to the same person.' Many a murderer has been hanged because of fewer than ten correspondences between his own finger-prints and those found at the scene of his crime.

It can well be imagined that Dudley's discovery caused a major sensation. Margery's dentist was held to be entirely innocent in the affair, if, indeed, anyone was guilty. The question as to how 'Walter' palmed off the thumb-prints of a living man as the impressions of his own dead ones has not yet been solved, though volumes on the subject have been written by both Margery's supporters and detractors. A finger-print expert, Professor Harold Cummins, stated:<sup>2</sup> 'There seems just ground for suspecting the use of artificial dies.'

#### FINGER-PRINTS CAN BE FORGED

The amazing thumb-print discovery prompted various people to experiment with a view to ascertaining whether three-dimensional finger-prints, in the form of moulds or dies, could be produced from two-dimensional inked prints

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted as *Bulletin III* ('The Identification of the "Walter" Prints') of the Nat. Lab. of Psychical Research, London, 1932. All the relevant photographs are reproduced.

<sup>2</sup> *Proceedings*, S.P.R., London, April, 1935, Vol. XLIII, Part 139.

on paper. Theoretically, I argued that this could be done by depositing (electro-plating) a film of copper or silver on the graphite print, gradually building up the image until it became three-dimensional, capable of being made into a thumb-stall die or something similar. But Professor Dr. Harold Cummins, of Tulane University, who took a great interest in the 'Walter' prints, has actually produced three-dimensional dies in hard wax and other substances from ordinary thumb-prints on paper. He has also reversed and 'mirrored' the prints which, when made into dies, impress the original finger-prints on to any substance, like a rubber stamp. Thus it has been proved that finger-prints *can* be forged and copied, and transferred (complete with sweat-gland markings) to any object which the original fingers never touched. Dr. Cummins kindly sent me a complete set of these hard wax ('Kerr') dies, produced from two-dimensional inked prints. His paper<sup>1</sup> on the subject should be studied.

The thumb-print controversy almost killed the Margery mediumship, but we still occasionally hear of 'Walter' effecting a marvellous cure,<sup>2</sup> becoming cognizant of articles hidden in a plaster of Paris cake,<sup>3</sup> taking part in some cross-correspondence tests,<sup>4</sup> or scoring some incredible card-calling guesses.<sup>5</sup> But the public—always fickle—is now concerned with the latest card-guessing miracle at Duke University and 'Walter' is decidedly a back number, though the controversy continues.

There is a vast literature concerning Margery, and the student who wishes to study the case more fully should consult it. The most recent *Proceedings* and *Journal* (1925 and onwards) of the American S.P.R. (which has consistently supported Margery, in spite of resignations among members and officials) contain a complete record of the case, from the positive angle. For negative reports and 'attacks,' the catalogues of the 'Harry Price Library of Magical Literature,' in the University of London, should be

<sup>1</sup> *Police Science: Counterfeit Finger-Prints*, New York, 1934.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal*, Am. S.P.R., July, 1936.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, February, 1935.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, November, 1935.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, January, 1938.



studied. This collection contains all the important works, pro and con, dealing with 'Margery.'

In spite of scientific investigations, committees of inquiry, and the work of individual researchers, not one of the vast and varied phenomena, alleged to be the work of 'Walter,' has been proved genuine scientifically. If the phenomena *are* genuine, Mrs. Crandon has been singularly unfortunate in not being able to demonstrate their genuineness before orthodoxy. If they *are* genuine, then 'survival' has been proved, and the 'independent' spirit voice demonstrated. If they are fraudulent, then the 'Walter' entity marks the greatest hoax in the annals of psychical research. Whether it be a hoax or not, I cannot say, as I was never given an opportunity of testing the medium. Crandon consistently refused to permit me to investigate though, as I have stated, I was fortunate enough to be present at one London séance. I had instruments in my laboratory at Kensington which, in an hour, would have settled the validity or otherwise of some of the 'Walter' phenomena. It is to be regretted that Crandon would not permit me to test his wife's mediumship, which, whether genuine or fraudulent, is the most remarkable ever recorded.

## CHAPTER VII

### STELLA C.

MISS STELLA C. shares with the Schneider boys the honour of being one of the very few physical mediums through whom, during the past fifty years, convincing positive results have been obtained under good conditions of control.

Stella (a non-professional medium), unlike her contemporaries, dislikes being 'investigated', takes little interest in psychical research, and scoffs at the idea that the manifestations which occur through her are the work of 'spirits.' The great majority of psychics, professional and otherwise, are, of course, convinced spiritualists.

#### A 'NATURAL MEDIUM'

Stella is also peculiar in that she appears to be a 'natural' medium. Though we induced certain phenomena during our experiments with her, as a young girl she was the focus of curious, spontaneous psychic manifestations, which puzzled her, though causing little concern.

When Stella first placed her services—albeit reluctantly—at our disposal in 1923, she was twenty-one years old, perfectly normal, healthy, good-looking, and a typical specimen of the modern, well-educated English girl. By profession she was a nurse.

Stella's story was an interesting one. When she was quite a child, curious happenings occurred in her vicinity—happenings which we now know must have had a psychic origin, though she was quite unaware of their importance or significance. For example, she would be sitting reading at a table, on which stood a vase of flowers, when suddenly a strong, cool breeze would sweep across the room, taking in its path the

flowers, which bent under the strain. The flowers were thought to induce the 'breezes.' This would happen at a time when there was no wind, or in a closed room. Occasionally, small objects in her vicinity would jerk themselves out of her way as she approached—telekinetic displacements which we afterwards induced at our experiments with her. Raps would sometimes be heard in various parts of the room in which she was present, especially on her bedstead—phenomena similar to those alleged to have been heard through two other young girl 'mediums,' Elizabeth Parsons and Margaret Fox, as I have recorded.<sup>1</sup> It is worth mentioning that these spontaneous phenomena did not manifest themselves until Stella had reached the age of puberty, but whether this fact is of psychological or physiological significance, it is difficult to say.

#### INDUCED PHENOMENA

On March 22, 1923, we had our first séance with Stella. We sat in a small room specially prepared for the purpose, and always locked, with a number of white and red lights, regulated by a rheostat. A sensitive self-recording thermometer was installed in order to ascertain if the alleged 'cold breezes' would affect it.

During the first series (May to October, 1923) of thirteen séances we witnessed the most remarkable phenomena, mostly of a physical nature. At the first séance a heavy table, weighing forty-three and a half pounds, was completely levitated from the floor three times, at the same time as distinct vibrations running through the table were felt by most sitters. The control of the medium was perfect: she quickly went into a light sleep and sank into the arms of a hospital matron who was her chief 'controller.' The temperature of the room was measured, and it was found that the thermometer index had fallen 11° Fahrenheit—obviously a telekinetic movement, and only partly a thermal one.

At the second séance the heavy table was again levitated

<sup>1</sup> See 'Introduction.'

many times, under a good red light which illuminated all present. A peculiar pulsating effect could be felt in the wood. The mercury again fell  $11.5^{\circ}$  Fahrenheit, and Stella's pulse slowed down from 126 at beginning of séance to 80 at end (a diminution in rapidity of 22.41 per cent). Raps in various parts of the room were heard, and the usual 'cool breezes' were very pronounced.

The third sitting was remarkable for the total demolition of a new, light, hexagonal wooden table, with three legs, which appeared to 'melt' under the fingers of the medium and sitters who surrounded it. This took place in full red light, to which was added some daylight—in order to diminish the violent psychic power which it was thought might harm someone. The table was reduced to matchwood, with percussive noises as each fracture occurred. It was a curious sensation to feel a strong wooden structure crumbling up beneath one's hands.

#### A SPONTANEOUS PREDICTION VERIFIED

The fourth séance (April 12, 1923) was remarkable for two incidents: by means of raps (calling over the alphabet, a 'rap' signifying the correct letter) it was ascertained that Stella's trance personality was named 'Palma.' As I have stated, Stella is not a spiritualist and, when she awoke, she was as puzzled as the rest of us as to the origin of the name, which was generally agreed to be the product of her sub-conscious mind. In the time-honoured way, it was to 'Palma' that we addressed all future requests.

Stella's phenomena were always of a physical nature, with one extraordinary exception. At the fourth séance, and while very sleepy (or in a deeper trance than usual) she suddenly stated that she 'saw' the front page of the *Daily Mail*. 'Palma' was questioned and we were told that the issue was dated 'May 19, 1923'—i.e. thirty-seven days later. 'Palma'—or Stella—minutely described what she saw on the page: a boy falling, the pouring of a white powder out of a tin, a man bending over the boy, the name 'Andrew Salt' in large letters, etc. All these details were recorded in

the protocol drawn up immediately after the séance and signed by all sitters—the usual routine.

On Saturday, May 19, 1923, one of the sitters sent me a telegram telling me to look at the front page of that day's *Daily Mail*. I did so and, to my astonishment, found that Stella had accurately visualized in trance the full-page advertisement for Andrews Liver Salts which appeared on the front page of the journal on this day. Stella was correct in ten definite points, and the question at once arose whether she could have acquired by normal sensory means the information she imparted to us at the séance. We communicated with the makers of the salts (at Newcastle-upon-Tyne) and the advertisement manager of the *Daily Mail*. The makers declared that, although the drawing 'seen' by Stella was in existence on April 12, no exhibition of it had taken place. The *Daily Mail* informed us that until about three weeks before the date of the advertisement (i.e. about April 28) there not only had been no intention communicated to them to use this picture, but they *had* been instructed to use an 'Abraham Lincoln' copy (published eventually on the front page of the *Daily Mail* of August 10, 1923), May 19 being originally booked for a display of this. In other words, the substitution was not ordered until more than a fortnight *after* Stella's trance vision.

#### STELLA'S DIMINISHING POWERS

During the remaining nine séances of this first series we witnessed many different phases of physical phenomena, but Stella's powers appeared to be weakening after those first few sittings when such strong—even violent—manifestations occurred. But we recorded many telekinetic movements of objects, raps, cool breezes, thermal changes, bluish-white (electrical?) 'psychic' lights, movements of objects in a sealed cage, etc. All these phenomena were brilliant, but they became weaker as the year advanced. Stella admitted that she was tiring of the experiments, in which she took little real interest.

## CRAWLING PSEUDPODS

For the Stella experiments I devised and constructed many pieces of special apparatus with a view to the production of phenomena under conditions which precluded fraud on the part of anyone present. These are detailed and illustrated in my book<sup>1</sup> on Stella. One of the instruments was rather like an optical bench. A system of lenses transmitted a pencil of red light through a sealed gauze cage containing a number of musical toys. If a toy moved, a shadow or silhouette of it would be thrown on a luminous screen, together with the shadow of the psychic structure which was moving it, if opaque enough. In practice, we frequently witnessed the movements of such toys and even photographed them being displaced by Stella's psychic extrusions, by throwing the shadows on to bromide paper and changing the red light for a white one.

But the most brilliant of these psychic structures was witnessed by Dr. E. J. Dingwall at the tenth sitting on June 7, 1923. Though a sheet of fine gauze net and a stout trellis screen, both reaching to the floor, intervened between Stella and the beam of red light, Dr. Dingwall (then Research Officer to the S.P.R.) plainly saw the pseudopod crawling from the medium into the beam of light, and back again. In his report, dated June 8, 1923, he says: 'When the red light was switched on under the table, I lay down on the floor and looked through the passage towards the luminous screen. From near the medium's foot, which was invisible, I saw an egg-shaped body beginning to crawl towards the centre of the floor under the table. It was white, and where the light was reflected it appeared opal. To the end nearest the medium was attached a thin white neck like a piece of macaroni. It advanced towards the centre and then rapidly withdrew to the shadow.'

<sup>1</sup> Stella C. *An Account of Some Original Experiments in Psychical Research*, London 1925.

## A 'MIRACLE' IN A SOAP-BUBBLE

Another piece of apparatus I devised for the Stella sittings I termed the Telekinetoscope. In effect, it was a fibre and metal spring contact-maker enclosed in and protected by a strong soap bubble<sup>1</sup> over which was placed a glass shade. From the contact-maker was led a heavy insulated cable to a small red pea-light and battery, also protected by a glass shade. The only possible way to light the lamp normally was to remove the shade, break the bubble, and depress (2 oz. pressure) the contact-maker—which closed the circuit. The lamp portion of the set-up was placed on the séance table in full view of the ten sitters, the bubble and cover being in the gauze and trellis cage beneath. This apparatus was tried at several sittings without result, though 'Palma' had promised us that 'she' would light the lamp. This promise was kept, for without warning, at the ninth séance (May 24, 1923), *the lamp suddenly lit up for about a second*. The sitting was at once brought to a close in order that the bubble, shade and contact-maker could be examined. The bubble, shade, and everything were found to be intact, and witnesses (including Mr. David Gow, then editor of *Light*) were brought in to testify to this fact. The bubble itself lasted for nearly an hour after the termination of the séance, when it spontaneously burst. The sitters at this first series of tests, in addition to those already mentioned, included Sir Ernest Bennett, M.P., Dr. V. J. Woolley, Mr. Hewat McKenzie, Mr. J. F. R. Stainer, K.C., the Hon. Everard Feilding, etc.

## LAST EXPERIMENTS WITH STELLA

Stella returned to us in 1926 and again in 1927, in order principally to assist us in our thermal experiments, which are described later. In 1928, just before her marriage, she consented to give us a final series of séances. Nine sittings were held between March and July, and a panel of scientists (which included Professors Julian Huxley, F.R.S., E. N. da C. Andrade, F.R.S., and Dr. R. J. Tillyard, F.R.S.) was

<sup>1</sup> Made of Castile soap, glycerol, and distilled water.

formed to take part in the experiments. Many manifestations were witnessed under excellent conditions of control, though it was evident that Stella's powers were growing still weaker—or her interest in our work had almost entirely evaporated—as we experienced nothing like the violent psychic disturbances recorded in the early days of 1923. But the phenomena, if weak, were good, as the report<sup>1</sup> clearly states: 'Thus at three out of the last four sittings considerable phenomena were obtained, clearly denoting a supernormal origin.... These phenomena, although not appearing to indicate the direction of any profound intelligence, yet did not give the impression of an uncontrolled force at work. The table was moved at times in a suggested direction, and raps denoting an affirmative or negative answer were repeatedly made either in or on the surface of the table.... On no occasion were the musical instruments inside the cage played, with the possible exception of the squeaker,<sup>2</sup> which on two occasions was thought by Professor Huxley to have been sounded.' ✓

#### JULIAN HUXLEY NEARLY ENTRANCED

A curious incident happened at the first séance (March 21, 1928) of the last series. Many raps were heard. Dr. E. B. Strauss heard—or felt—two raps under his hands, and then the table jerked slightly. Again more raps and 'a curious movement of the table was felt by Professor Huxley, Dr. Strauss and Mr. C. C. L. Gregory. Dr. Strauss and Professor Huxley felt a strange feeling up their arms.' The official report continues: 'At 4.41 Professor Huxley deliberately relaxed and nearly went into the trance state.' The feeling soon passed, but the sitters on either side of him felt him go limp and he admitted that he felt that he might be going into a trance. The 'strange feeling up their arms' reported by Huxley and Strauss was of an unfamiliar character, and apparently not the response to any ordinary external sensory stimulus, such as parasthesia associated with cramp.

<sup>1</sup> By Lord Charles Hope, in the *British Journal of Psychical Research*, Vol. II, pp. 65-78, London, 1928.

<sup>2</sup> A rubber bulb with reed which, when pressed, emits a musical note.



## STELLA A TRANSFORMER OF ENERGY?

The five years during which Stella was—rather sporadically—under our observation were sufficient to satisfy us that we had witnessed the following phenomena under excellent conditions: (a) *Physical*. Telekineses, materializations, raps, lights, thermal variations. (b) *Mental*. Visual prognosis or prevision (the *Daily Mail* incident). Of the above, I think the variations in séance-room temperature were the most striking.

It has always been a matter for speculation whether the 'cool breezes' experienced during séances with some psychics are a physical and not merely a physiological effect. From the earliest records one learns that this apparent lowering of the temperature was noticed and commented upon. Sir William Crookes appears to have made sporadic attempts at testing the theory that the immediate vicinity of the psychic undergoes some thermal change during the trance state. But little was done in this direction, and less published.

With the advent of Stella in 1923 I determined thoroughly to test the possibility of recording these alleged thermal changes, and installed a delicate recording thermometer. The results of our observations were startling. As I have already mentioned, at the first séance the mercury fell no fewer than  $11^{\circ}$  Fahrenheit, accompanied by violent telekinetic movements of the séance table. At nearly all of the séances in this series, the instrument measured a fall in temperature. The sudden changes appeared to synchronize with violent telekinetic displacements. The thermometric records of eleven séances are tabulated below:

No.	Date of Sitting	Time of start a.m.	Temp. at Start	Time of Finish p.m.	Temp. at Finish	Minimum (Inter- mediate)	Fall	Rise
1	Mar. 22	11.32	$60^{\circ}$	12.35	$62^{\circ}$	$49^{\circ}$	$11^{\circ}$	$13^{\circ}$
2	Mar. 29	11.38	$61^{\circ}$	12.47	$65^{\circ}$	$49.5^{\circ}$	$11.5^{\circ}$	$15.5^{\circ}$
3	April 5	11.20	$64.5^{\circ}$	12.43	$65^{\circ}$	$57^{\circ}$	$7.5^{\circ}$	$8^{\circ}$
4	April 12	11.20	$62^{\circ}$	1.3	$66^{\circ}$	$58^{\circ}$	$4^{\circ}$	$8^{\circ}$
5	April 19	11.18	$63.5^{\circ}$	1.15	$64.5^{\circ}$	$43^{\circ}$	$20.5^{\circ}$	$21.5^{\circ}$
6	May 3	11.40	$67^{\circ}$	1.45	$74^{\circ}$	no fall		$7^{\circ}$
7	May 10	11.5	$58.5^{\circ}$	12.25	$64^{\circ}$	$57^{\circ}$	$1.5^{\circ}$	$7^{\circ}$
8	May 17	11.0	$57.5^{\circ}$	12.55	$64^{\circ}$	$57^{\circ}$	$0.5^{\circ}$	$7^{\circ}$
9	May 24	11.15	$59^{\circ}$	12.55	$65^{\circ}$	$58^{\circ}$	$1^{\circ}$	$7^{\circ}$
10	June 7	11.6	$62.5^{\circ}$	12.55	$68.5^{\circ}$	$61.75^{\circ}$	$0.75^{\circ}$	$6.75^{\circ}$
11	June 21	11.15	$63.5^{\circ}$	12.45	$68.5^{\circ}$	$62.5^{\circ}$	$1^{\circ}$	$6^{\circ}$

I think it will occur to anyone who studies this table that some psycho-mechanical power was partly responsible for the displacement of the index in the thermometer. With the violent telekinetic movements of tables and other objects which we experienced in these early experiments with Stella, it is reasonable to suppose that some small portion of this kinetic power dissipated itself in displacing the metal index in the tube of the thermometer, independent of the cooling of the séance room. Later experiments confirmed this view. In order fully to appreciate the variations in temperature and their bearing on the other phenomena, my full report<sup>1</sup> of these séances should be studied.

By May, 1926, I had established the National Laboratory of Psychical Research, and for measuring thermal variations at séances I had constructed for me a sensitive instrument which I designed specially for the Stella experiments. It is a transmitting thermograph with a long mercury capillary tube and copper bulb. A three-hour drum is driven by the usual clockwork mechanism. The range of the instrument is 30°, from 45° to 75° Fahrenheit. The chart used with it is divided into hours, quarters, and minutes. The degree markings are divided into four parts, and the instrument can easily be read to .1°. The thermograph is guaranteed by the makers (Negretti & Zambra) to be accurate to .1°. The instrument can be securely locked.

Our first experiment with this instrument took place on May 26, 1926, with Stella. As a control, an ordinary recording thermograph (thermocouple) and a minimum thermometer were placed on the mantelpiece of the séance room, the copper bulb of our special instrument being placed in the interior of the gauze cage, the top of which was used as a séance table.

Both thermographs were *in situ* in their respective positions for an hour before the séance commenced, in order that the normal room temperature should be measured. The clockwork was set in motion at four o'clock. At five o'clock, when the séance began, the instrument read 71.4°, gradually rising (5.23) to 72.75°. At 5.23 (as per dictaphone record) Stella became entranced; the indicating pen at once began

<sup>1</sup> *Stella C.*, op. cit.

to drop, proving that there was a fall in the temperature of the interior of the cage table. At 5.45 the thermograph gave a reading of  $72.14^{\circ}$ . Afterwards the temperature rose gradually to  $75^{\circ}$  at 6.35 p.m. The control thermograph on the mantelpiece showed a steady rise right through the séance.

#### DR. TILLYARD TESTS STELLA

At our third experiment, at which Dr. R. J. Tillyard was present, there were several sudden changes in temperature at times when special manifestations occurred. Dr. Tillyard contributed to *Nature*<sup>1</sup> his account of the experiment and reproduced the graph of the thermal variations recorded at this séance.

I could go on multiplying instances when we experienced marked changes in the temperature during our experiments with Stella. A paper, which I read before the Third International Congress of Psychical Research in Paris,<sup>2</sup> gave complete details and many graphs were reproduced.

I want to emphasize that every possible precaution was taken against any tampering with the transmitting thermograph; also that the séance-room was never heated prior to or during the sittings. At least two control instruments were always placed in various parts of the séance-room and always showed a steady rise during the experiments, which, of course, was normal.

Our experiments proved the objective nature of the cold breezes and present a purely physical problem. As Dr. Tillyard remarked in *Nature*:<sup>3</sup> 'It is not an extravagant hypothesis which finds an explanation for the production of "supernormal" physical phenomena in the withdrawal of heat from the circle of sitters, such heat being turned into some other form of energy, possibly of a kind not yet investigated by science.' Normally, when a number of people sit in a closed room, the temperature mounts steadily upwards,

<sup>1</sup> *Science and Psychical Research*, July 31, 1926.

<sup>2</sup> In September, 1927. Paper published in *Am. S.P.R. Journal*, November, 1927.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*

owing to the heat radiation and combustion products of the persons present.

Assuming our experiments to be as perfect as we thought they were, it seems almost certain that some sensitives—such as Stella—are transformers of energy rather than a source of energy. Mr. E. E. Dudley has computed<sup>1</sup> that the transformed energy at one of Willi Schneider's séances was sufficient to lift one ton through a height of ten feet for each minute that the séance continued.

Some other psychics appear to have the power of transforming caloric energy. In my experiments with Willi Schneider I report<sup>2</sup> a considerable drop in temperature during two séances. The late Professor Karl Gruber of Munich, wrote me that he had obtained a definite drop in temperature with the same medium. Professor Christian Winther, of Copenhagen, has experienced a fall in temperature during his experiments with Anna Rasmussen, and probably there are other workers who have achieved the same results. One thing is quite clear: the thermal variations during the entranced state of a psychic is a phenomenon of considerable importance, and worthy of the attention of all research workers who are striving to elucidate the laws underlying psychic phenomena. But the tests, to be really convincing, should be held in a calorimetric chamber equipped for measuring variations in electrical energy.

<sup>1</sup> 'Energy transformation at Séances,' *Journal*, Am. S.P.R., July, 1926.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal*, Am. S.P.R., January, 1926.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ‘ROSALIE’

**B**EFORE we leave the subject of physical phenomena, I must describe the most remarkable case of materialization, or rather alleged materialization, I have ever witnessed. It is with considerable hesitation that I publish this account, as I have had only one sitting, and have been unable, as yet, to obtain independent corroboration of the extraordinary ‘phenomenon’ which I witnessed. Though I am satisfied that I took every precaution against deception which my long experience in these matters suggested, it is still possible that I *was* deceived, and I do not, as yet, accept the materialization at its face value. But if I *was* deceived, how was it done and what possible motive could there have been? The séance was held fifteen months before these introductory remarks were written, and the publishers of this volume saw the report soon after I wrote it, within a few hours of the termination of the séance. After careful consideration, they think that, with the above reservations, the protocol of the séance should be printed. Striking as my experience was, it is not comparable with the classic experiments of Sir William Crookes with the medium Florrie Cook, more than sixty years ago.<sup>1</sup> He not only saw, felt, and embraced the ‘spirit,’ ‘Katie King,’ but actually photographed it forty times (see Frontispiece). Sometimes Florrie and ‘Katie’ appear in the same photograph. To the end of his days, nothing could shake Sir William’s conviction that he had contacted with the spirit world. To conclude, although I am publishing a record of this most interesting séance, which much impressed me at the time, I am suspending judgment as to whether the ‘materialization’ was what it purported to be.

<sup>1</sup> *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism*, London, 1874.

December 15, 1937.

On the morning of Wednesday, December 8, 1937, I was rung up at my office by a lady, obviously educated and cultured, who informed me that she had read in *The Listener*<sup>1</sup> the published version of a broadcast talk<sup>2</sup> which I had given on 'haunted houses.' The reason she gave for communicating with me was that she was impressed with my efforts to 'ascertain the truth' in such matters. She told me that she had noted that I could 'guarantee a ghost' in a particular haunted house which I mentioned in my broadcast; she, too, could 'guarantee a ghost,' but one of a much more objective nature than any I had experienced.

My informant lives in one of the better-class London suburbs, and every Wednesday evening, she told me, she and her friends hold a 'family séance' at her house, at which a 'little girl spirit,' known as Rosalie, *always* materializes. The reason for approaching me, she said, was to invite me to join the family circle any Wednesday, by arrangement, and she was certain that I should be convinced of the phenomenon of materialization, of which she knew I was very sceptical.

#### CONDITIONS OF SITTING

Of course, there were conditions, which I anticipated. But I was genuinely astonished at the simple rules to which I was asked to adhere. In the first place, if I accepted the invitation to attend a séance, I was to promise not to reveal the identity of any of the sitters, or the locality where the séance was held. I could write an account of the séance, giving my candid views of it, provided I mentioned no names. If I were impressed with the proceedings, I was 'not to seek a scientific inquiry', as the mother of 'Rosalie,' who attended each sitting, was 'terrified that her girl might be frightened away.' These Wednesday meetings were in the nature of a sacred communion with the spirit of her daughter, and would be maintained as such. I was not to bring to the séance any light (such as a torch); I was not to speak to or

<sup>1</sup> For November 10, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> To the *Empire*, on November 4, and following days.

touch the materialization without permission, and I was not to do anything, or make any experiment, without the sitters' consent. I would not be asked to sign any document embodying these arrangements: it was to be a 'gentlemen's agreement.'

And now came the surprise. If I accepted their invitation, I would be allowed full control of the room and the sitters *up to the beginning of the séance*. I could search the house from top to bottom, seal all external windows and doors, search the séance room (the drawing-room), all doors and windows of which I could lock and seal, I could move—or remove—any furniture, ornaments, etc., from the séance room which I thought fit, I could control the room to the extent of sprinkling powdered starch or other substance round doors or windows, or place electrical contacts there (she admitted that she had gathered that this was what I did, from my broadcast from the 'haunted house'<sup>1</sup>), I could search the sitters or any person in the house immediately before or after the séance. But once the sitting had begun, I was to remain passive and ask permission if I wanted to do anything, or make any alteration during the séance. I told the speaker that I was impressed with the conditions imposed, and that I would think the matter over and write to her. She replied that if I accepted, I was to be at the house soon after seven p.m. and that the séance commenced usually at about eight o'clock.

#### A VISIT TO THE SUBURBS

On Monday, December 13, I wrote to Mrs. X., saying that I would accept her invitation and agree to all the conditions. As I happened to have lunch with Mr. R. S. Lambert, then editor of *The Listener*, on the day that she telephoned me, I asked her whether she would permit him to accompany me as a sort of witness of anything striking that might occur. I told her that I would personally guarantee that he would fulfil all the conditions that I had accepted, and that he had said as much at lunch on the

<sup>1</sup> On March 10, 1936, from an old Manor, Meopham, Kent. (See Chapter XV.)

day she rang me up. If the idea of a witness was acceptable, I asked her to telephone or telegraph her consent on receipt of letter, in order that Mr. Lambert could make the necessary arrangements. This confirmatory message was not forthcoming, so on Wednesday, December 15, I journeyed alone to the London suburb—to the most amazing séance that even I have experienced.

#### THE HOUSE

I arrived at M—— just after seven o'clock and made my way to Mrs. X's residence, which I found was a large double-fronted, detached house, in a good-class road, with a flight of twelve stone steps leading to the front door, on each side of which was a large room with bay windows. It was at a corner of another road, and had an area. There were three entrances (four, including the French window leading to garden) to the house: the front door, an area entrance (seldom used, except when coal was delivered, the coal cellar being under the front steps), approached by a flight of steps, and a door at the back of the house reached by a path running parallel to the side road. There were seven windows facing the main road: two on ground level, two above, two small attic windows at the top, and a small window (guarded by iron bars) in the area room. At the back of the house were four windows, and a French window giving access to the long, narrow garden, which was reached by some iron steps. On the side of the house facing the transverse road were two smallish windows and a lavatory window, and in the wall opposite the next-door house were two windows, a bathroom window and another lavatory window. I have given a description of the house in some detail, in order that the reader can visualize the sort of place it is: a typical, largish, mid-Victorian, double-fronted, detached suburban house.



## THE HISTORY OF 'ROSALIE'

I was admitted by a trim parlour-maid and shown into the dining-room (the apartment on the right of the stone steps), where I was greeted by Mr. and Mrs. X., and their daughter, aged nearly seventeen. A simple meal was set. Introductions over, we sat round the table and enjoyed a light supper, during which I heard the complete story of 'Rosalie.'

Mr. X. is in business in the City and both he and his wife are charming, with most affable personalities. They are not spiritualists, but are interested in psychical research, though they have read little of the standard literature. However, they listen to broadcasts on the subject, and I found that they knew something of my work from *The Listener* and other journals. They appeared pleased to make my acquaintance.

My hostess has a friend named Madame Z., whom she met when helping at a local church bazaar. Madame Z. is of French extraction, was a nurse, and married an English officer at the beginning of the Great War. Her husband was killed in action in 1916, leaving his wife with a baby, Rosalie. Rosalie was never strong and at the age of six she contracted diphtheria and passed away (in 1921) in her mother's arms. She was ill for only a few days. Madame Z. is a spiritualist, though she belongs to no 'church' or group. She rents two rooms in the neighbourhood, her only home. In the spring of 1925—according to my hostess—Madame Z. was awakened during the night by the sound of her dead girl's voice crying 'mother.' This occurred so frequently that Madame Z. got into the habit of lying awake at night, waiting for the 'voice.' Gradually, she thought she could see (in the dark) the dim outline of 'Rosalie' and hear her footsteps in the room. Finally, the mother declared, one night she put her arm out of bed and her hand was clasped by that of her little girl.

Having very few friends in England, Madame Z. became intimate with the X. family. It was my host and his wife who suggested that regular séances should be held in their house (because Madame's apartments are quite unsuitable

for the purpose) in order to encourage the visits of 'Rosalie.' The X.'s knew enough of séance technique to furnish what they thought were the right 'conditions,' and the sittings began. This was towards the end of 1928. It was nearly six months before there was any sign of 'Rosalie,' though she visited her mother's bedroom, as formerly. In the late spring of 1929 'Rosalie' materialized without warning and made her presence known (of course, in complete darkness) by again gently clasping her mother's hand. From that evening the girl appeared regularly. Very gradually, they introduced a little light into the séances by means of ordinary cheap hand mirrors, the glass being covered with luminous paint. Four of these are sometimes used simultaneously. Finally, 'Rosalie' began to speak, usually to her mother, answering simple questions, and replying in monosyllables. Very rarely did she say more than 'yes' or 'no,' appearing extraordinarily shy. The original circle, with little alteration, developed the 'materialization,' but a very occasional visitor appeared to make little difference to the coming of 'Rosalie,' if that visitor was well known to the circle. Hence my invitation to be present. I heard a great deal about the questions that 'Rosalie' was alleged to have answered, but it would take too long to detail them here. Such is the history of 'Rosalie,' whom I was so soon to see, feel, and hear.

#### THE SEARCH

By the time we had finished supper and I had heard the story of Rosalie, the two remaining sitters had arrived, and were waiting for us in the room opposite, across the hall—the drawing-room (séance room). I was first introduced to Madame Z., a pleasant French lady, and on the right side of fifty as regards her age. She said she was very pleased to meet me and apologized for not being able to admit my friend (Mr. Lambert) to the séance, as they had never risked two strangers at a sitting 'in case it frightened "Rosalie".' The other sitter was a cheerful young fellow, whom I will call Jim. He is a bank clerk in the City, and I suspect his presence in the circle is due more to his interest

in the daughter of the house than in 'Rosalie.' Jim is a typical, gentlemanly bank clerk, aged about twenty-two.

After the introductions, I said I would make a tour of the house. I was accompanied by Mr. X. and Jim, and I explored the place from attics to area. I could go where I pleased, and asked to be taken to every room. I had brought with me a gimlet, screw-eyes, white tape, adhesive surgical tape, a dredger full of powdered starch, and a pocket torch (which I did not take into the séance-room). As I came to a window, I closed and fastened it and stuck a strip of tape (which I initialled in ink) across the join where the sashes met. In the case of two 'dormer'-type windows, I twisted the tape round the fasteners, and secured the initialled sticky ends to the window frames.

I sealed the three external doors and the French window of the house with screw-eyes, through which I threaded adhesive tape, tied in three knots, which I initialled. The staff of the house consisted of the parlour-maid (whom I had seen) and a cook, whom I saw in the kitchen. I was warned to drop no word concerning 'Rosalie.' The women knew that 'séances' were held in the house, but had not been informed as to what took place at them. They were instructed not to answer any knock or ring during the séance, and telephone callers were to be told to ring up later.

I now turned my attention to the drawing-room, where the séance was to be held, and I examined it with great care. It was nearly square, measuring twenty-four feet by twenty-one feet, by nine feet six inches high. In the bay of the window was a settee and against the opposite wall was a long mahogany sideboard with eight drawers. On a square occasional table near one corner was an electric transportable 'Pye' radio, plugged into a socket near the floor. From this same socket a wire led to a small electric stove in the opposite corner, the flex trailing across the hearthrug. In another corner was a round occasional table, supporting a work-basket. On the mantelpiece were a clock and some ornaments. Six solid mahogany chairs completed the furniture of the room—with the exception of an Airedale dog which was now lying in front of the electric fire, having just shifted his quarters from in front of the grate. There had

been a big fire in the grate, but it had been allowed to go out. One element of the electric fire was switched on. The ceiling of the room was of plaster and there were six pictures on the walls, which were distempered. The curtains which screened the windows had been purchased specially for these séances. They were of thick, heavy material, suspended on rails, and the edges overlapped, effectively preventing any street light from entering the room. On the floor, composed of polished hardwood boards, were spread four large Persian rugs.

#### CONTROLLING THE SÉANCE ROOM .

Having assembled all the sitters in the room, I looked around to see what could be done without in the way of furniture, etc. I decided that the ornaments, clock, pictures, and work-basket were not wanted, and these were removed into the dining-room. Then I sprinkled starch powder in the hall outside the séance room door.

I then locked the door, put the key in my pocket, and proceeded to affix my seals. These were the usual tapes and screw-eyes. Then I stuck four strips of adhesive tape across door and lintel, and initialled them. I treated the windows in the same way, and was confident that no one could enter the room *via* door or window. But there remained the chimney, and for a moment I was puzzled as to how I could control it. Then I hit on the idea of placing a sheet of an evening newspaper (which I had with me) flat on the top bar of the low grate, just under the chimney aperture, and sprinkling it thickly with the starch powder. Then, with my finger, I drew my monogram in the starch, the printed matter beneath showing through. No one could have tampered with the grate or chimney without disturbing the starch.

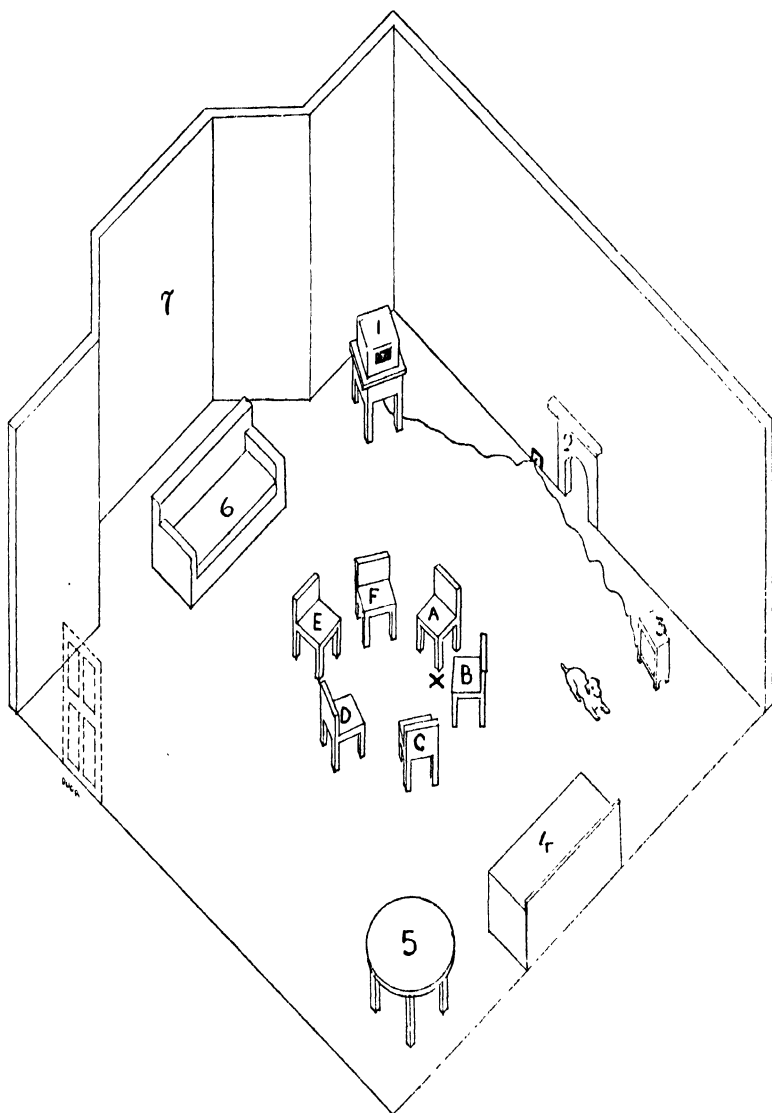
Having sealed the windows, door, etc., I examined everything in the room very thoroughly. With the aid of Mr. X., I moved the large settee and the heavy sideboard. Each drawer was emptied. They contained such articles as clean, table napkins, gramophone records (the gramophone was in an upper room) and the odds and ends that accumulate in

every house—especially in drawers. The settee I turned upside down, trod on the two loose cushions, punched the canvas and webbing beneath and made the springs creak. Then we removed the four rugs and I minutely examined every inch of the polished boards, which I found were nailed, tongued and grooved. It was a well-built house, and I was unable to get my penknife blade between the boards, every one of which appeared as solid as a rock. To finish my inspection of the room, I opened the back of the wireless cabinet, and saw nothing unusual. In any case, I was informed that the radio was going to be used.

I had been told that I could examine the persons of the sitters before and after the séance, if I wished. I could not very well search the three ladies, but I asked permission to explore the clothing of Mr. X. and Jim, and they at once turned out their pockets. I ran my hands over their clothes and satisfied myself that they were concealing nothing which could be used to simulate a phenomenon. The two elder ladies realized my predicament in not being able to examine them, and we compromised by their agreeing to my request that I should sit between them. Miss X. had, it appeared, attended a 'health and beauty' class earlier in the evening and she had on some sort of gymnasium clothes under her house dress. Without my requesting it, she immediately pulled up her skirt and revealed a pair of tight-fitting dark knickers. I was quite convinced that she had nothing concealed on her person. My last act before switching off the five (four bracket and one ceiling) lights and the fire, was to sprinkle starch dust in front of the door and chimney, after directing the sitters to their seats. The arrangement of the chairs, and the general lay-out of the room can be seen from the plan which I made before the séance, reproduced herewith. It was exactly 9.10 p.m. when the séance began.

#### BUILDING UP 'ROSALIE'

The arrangement of the sitters (*my* arrangement, by the way) was as follows: I (*A*, see plan) sat with my back to the fireplace, with my hostess (*F*) on my right, and Madame Z.



**ARRANGEMENT OF FURNITURE AND LAY-OUT OF ROOM  
AT 'ROSALIE' SÉANCE**

A, B, C, D, E, F, seats occupied by Price, Madame Z, Miss X, Jim, Mr. X, Mrs. X, respectively, in the order named.

(1) Small table supporting radio cabinet; (2) fire-place; (3) electric fire; (4) sideboard; (5) occasional table; (6) settee; (7) curtained window recess. X, where 'Rosalie' appeared.

(B) on my left. Next to her was Miss X. (C), then Jim (D), and finally X. himself (E). Four of the luminous plaques, already mentioned, had been handed round, and they rested on the floor face downwards, by the sides of the chairs occupied by Madame Z., Mrs. X., Jim, and myself. The luminous surface of each plaque had been activated at an electric light bulb previous to the séance. We were informed (by Mrs. X.) that we could talk quietly unless told not to. There was neither hymn-singing nor prayers, nor any suggestion of the pandemonium which often accompanies a séance. Although it was pitch dark, I could accurately determine where a voice was coming from, and whose voice it was, and could even hear the breathing of the various sitters.

After chatting quietly for about twenty minutes, we were asked to stop and Mr. X. said he would put on the wireless. He left his seat and groped his way to the small table behind me, to my right. He had some difficulty in finding suitable music, which he finally received from a foreign station. The small lamps which lit up the stations panel also illuminated the room and I could see the sitters distinctly. Madame Z. appeared to be crying.

Within five minutes of turning on the radio, X. switched it off again and resumed his seat. Then we were asked to remain quiet. No one spoke. A little later I heard Madame Z. softly whisper 'Rosalie!' This was repeated, at intervals, for about twenty minutes. Sometimes Mrs. X. also called her. I could hear both Madame Z. and Miss X. sobbing quietly. I had been warned that the séance was of a sacred character, but I had not anticipated such a display of emotion. I could not help contrasting this sitting with the matter-of-fact laboratory experiments with which I was much more familiar.

#### THE COMING OF 'ROSALIE'

It was a few minutes after I heard the clock in the hall strike ten that Madame Z. gave a choking sob and said something about 'my darling.' Mrs. X. leant towards me

and whispered, "Rosalie" is here—don't speak!' At the same moment I, too, realized that there was something quite close to me. I neither heard nor saw anything, but the sensation was an olfactory one—I seemed to *smell* something that was not there previously. It was a *strange*, not unpleasant smell. Everyone was silent except for the rather distressing emotion of the mother. I sensed, rather than knew, that she was fondling her child. The next sound I heard was a sort of shuffling of feet on my left at the same moment as something slightly touched the back of my left hand, which was resting on my knee (we were not holding hands in any way). It felt soft and a little warm. I did not attempt to feel what had touched me, but sat very still. Madame Z. continued to whisper to the 'child,' and her sobbing ceased somewhat.

After a few minutes, Mrs. X. asked the mother whether I could touch the 'materialization.' Permission was given, and I stretched out my left arm and, to my amazement, it came in contact with, apparently, the nude figure of a little girl, aged about six years. I slowly passed my hand across her chest up to her chin and cheeks. Her flesh felt warm, though (and this may have been imagination) not so warm as one would expect to find normal human flesh. I laid the back of my left hand on her right cheek: it felt soft and warm and I could distinctly hear her breathing. I then placed my hand on her chest again and could feel the respiratory movements. My hand travelled to her thighs, back and buttocks, then traversed her legs and feet. They were the normal limbs of a normal six-year-old. I estimated her height at about three feet, seven inches. I could feel her hair, long and soft, falling over her shoulders.

There are no words to express how I felt at the appearance of the form before me—or rather to the left of me. A supreme scientific interest, with a feeling of absolute incredulity, would best describe my reactions. I had not bargained for anything so wonderful (or so clever!) as this. But if I had been tricked, so had the mother, and that was unthinkable. She, at least, was not acting a part. I asked whether I could hold 'Rosalie.' I was told that I could move my chair nearer to the child and this I did. I was now able to use



both hands and again felt every inch of that little form. If it is a spirit—I argued to myself—then there is no difference between a spirit and a human being. With my right hand, I lifted ‘Rosalie’s’ right arm and felt her pulse. It appeared to be too quick and I estimated a rate of 90 to the minute.<sup>1</sup> I put my ear to her chest and could distinctly hear her heart beating. I then took both her hands and asked X., his daughter, and Jim to speak in order to prove their presence in their respective seats. They did so. I knew that Madame Z. and Mrs. X. were on either side of me, as I had only to put out my hand to touch them.

At this juncture I asked my hostess if Madame Z. would allow me to use the luminous plaque. After a little discussion it was agreed that both Mrs. X. and I should shine our plaques on ‘Rosalie,’ the stipulation being that we should begin at the feet of the form, and then later illuminate the upper part of the child. I picked up my plaque and in turning it over a soft, fluorescent glow flooded the feet of ‘Rosalie.’ They were the normal feet of a normal child. Mrs. X. held her plaque to the left side of the girl, while I illuminated the front of her. I could see the soft texture of the flesh, which appeared to be without a blemish. As our plaques travelled upwards the face of the form was revealed and we beheld a beautiful child who would have graced any nursery in the land. Her features were classical and she looked older than her alleged years. Her face appeared very pale, but the fluorescence would tend to ‘kill’ any colouring in her cheeks. Her eyes (they appeared to be dark blue) were bright with an intelligent gleam in them. Her lips were closed, with rather a set expression. Madame Z. said the examination must now cease as ‘Rosalie was wanted.’ As a special favour, I requested that I might put some questions to ‘Rosalie’ and this was granted with the remark that it was unlikely that she would speak that night.

<sup>1</sup> I have since ascertained that the normal pulse rate of a child from 2 to 7 years is 100 to 90.

## 'ROSALIE' 'SPEAKS'

If the reader were suddenly faced with an alleged spirit, what questions would he ask it? With some preparation, a series of useful inquiries could be drawn up, but on the spur of the moment it is extremely difficult to make proper use of such an opportunity—especially when the 'spirit' is so young and unsophisticated. However, I suppose I must have subconsciously imagined that the child was a real one; that it lived in a real place; and that it understood perfectly what I was saying. I found myself asking 'Rosalie' what I should ask any other little girl, who had come from some strange place and whom I chanced to meet. I was permitted one minute only in which to question her, and this is what I asked her:

'Where do you live, Rosalie?' (No answer.)

'What do you do there?' (No answer.)

'Do you play with other children?' (No answer.)

'Have you any toys there?' (No answer.)

'Are there any animal pets?' (No answer.)

The questions were asked deliberately and I paused between each one. 'Rosalie' simply stared and did not seem to understand what I was saying. I asked her a final question: 'Rosalie, do you love your mummy?' I saw the expression on her face change and her eyes light up. 'Yes,' she lisped. 'Rosalie' had barely uttered this single word when Madame Z. gave one cry and clasped her 'daughter' to her breast. Mrs. X. placed our plaques on the floor again and asked for complete silence—rather difficult as all the women in the circle were crying. I must admit that I was rather affected myself—it was a touching and pathetic scene.

In about fifteen minutes 'Rosalie' had gone. I neither heard nor felt anything of her leaving, but as the hall clock struck eleven, Mrs. X. informed me that the séance was over. X. switched on all the lights and invited me to make any search I liked. I examined all my seals and every one was intact. I again removed the furniture and examined the floor, sideboard, settee, etc., and found everything

normal. The starch powder was undisturbed. Even the Airedale was still asleep in front of the cold electric fire. At least, the séance had not affected *him*. My host asked me to remove the seals—which I did—and he opened the door and rang for refreshments. While these were being brought, I accompanied Jim in another tour of the house. All my seals were intact. I remained at the house until nearly midnight, when I took my leave with many thanks for an extraordinarily interesting and puzzling evening.

December 16, 1937.

I began writing this report (which is printed verbatim and uncorrected) within two hours of the termination of the séance, in bed at the Royal Societies Club. I purposely wrote the report at once, while my impressions were still fresh. I feel I have not done justice in this report to the amazing events of last night, and I am still wondering if 'Rosalie' was a genuine spirit entity, or whether the whole thing was an elaborate hoax. If the latter, then the 'hoax' has been going on for years and no actress in the world could simulate Madame Z.'s poignant emotion. And where did the 'spirit' come from? These are questions which I shall have to think about, and answer. If I had witnessed the materialization of 'Rosalie' *in my own laboratory*, I should not hesitate to proclaim to an incredulous world that *survival was proved*. It is possible—though very doubtful—that last night's historic (as far as I am concerned) séance may be repeated under better conditions in a laboratory. But Madame Z. is convinced that 'Rosalie would be frightened away.' The sitting I have just attended is at least distinguished by the complete absence of blasphemous humbug and hymn-singing, which characterize so many pseudo-spiritualist séances run by rogues for profit. Looking at it in retrospect, I can think of several things I ought to have done that I did not do, and one of these is the taking of 'Rosalie's' finger-prints. I had ample opportunity, but no materials. Another thing I might have done was to have ascertained who the 'medium' was. Madame Z. herself denies that she is mediumistic, but I can think of no one else. Apparently, there was no medium.

## CHAPTER IX

### MIRACLES OF THE MIND: SOME FAMOUS MENTAL MEDIUMS

**I**F survival is ever proved to the satisfaction of scientific orthodoxy, it will, I think, be by the mental phenomena of the séance-room, and not by the physical. It is difficult to believe that levitating tables, rattling tambourines, self-knotting handkerchiefs, thermal variations and the like, are the outward and visible signs of the presence of 'spirits.' Much more probably are these manifestations due to some power, induced under certain conditions, which physicists will be able, in time, to duplicate at leisure in the laboratory.

If an attempt is made to prove survival through the trance utterances, clairvoyance, cross-correspondences, automatic writings, and kindred phenomena of mental mediums, a vast amount of chaff will have to be sifted by the scientists before they discover the good grain for which they are seeking.

Mental mediums, often women, appear to have no qualities, intellectual or physiological, which distinguish them from their fellows. On the contrary, they often emerge from the semi-educated class of society. (There are, of course, brilliant exceptions—e.g. Mrs. A. W. Verrall, the automatist, and Professor Gilbert Murray, the classical scholar—whose work is known to science, but not to the public). Their utterances are often puerile, platitudinous, or non-sensical. The trance addresses one hears at the typical spiritualist service have been called 'a farrago of stale platitudes and twaddling ethico-religious uplift,' with little spirituality in them. And after nearly a hundred years of intensive experimentation, we have learnt absolutely nothing from the spirits. And the many recorded conversations with the dead, such as can be found in *Raymond*, are often so mundane that they are usually received with scepticism, if not ridicule. Some of these messages *may* be true. But if

true, why so silly? Are our dead relatives and friends incapable of giving us information that so vitally concerns us, and of which we are so badly in need? Are they incapable of giving us *one* new fact concerning this world—to say nothing of the next—not already known to us? Or *one* proof—absolute and scientific—that our souls ‘survive’ if our bodies do not? It rather looks like it.

#### SOME GOOD EVIDENCE

But having said the worst about mediums’ trance utterances and ‘spirit messages,’ the fact remains that there is a residuum of evidence, scattered through thousands of volumes, which, in the aggregate, is impressive. This evidence is like the pieces of a jig-saw puzzle. Disconnected scraps of evidence are on the table before you and, separate and detached, they appear as if they might be parts of the ‘survival’ puzzle you are trying to solve. But, however hard you try, the bits simply will not fit together and the picture remains uncompleted.

For my examples of good mental phenomena I have chosen some representative cases. The mediums concerned, some of them non-professional, can be regarded as honest and sincere. They have been selected from thousands of ‘psychics’—most of them charlatans—who have ‘operated’ during the past fifty years. It is so easy to be a ‘mental’ medium, ‘psychologist,’ palmist or astrologer: no fear of being ‘exposed,’ or grabbed in the dark; no training required or capital to invest; no tricks to learn and little to fear except perhaps a rather nervous police emissary posing as a sitter, with a possible conviction as a fortune-teller. How easy it is to be a ‘mental medium’ is proved by the fact that hundreds of these women can be found in drapery establishments, cafés, and similar places, and in top back rooms in the purlieus of Bond Street and Mayfair. Most of these people have names as picturesque as the rubbish which they sell to the silly ‘clients’ who patronize them, and it is one of the major mysteries why the police—who have ample powers—do not stop this particular ‘racket.’

## THE GREATEST MENTAL MEDIUM

Probably the greatest mental medium of whom we have any record is Mrs. Leonore E. Piper, of Boston, Mass. She discovered her powers at an early age through visiting a blind medium named Cocke, and in 1885 attracted the attention of scientists. Professor William James appears to have been the first to study her seriously. He was impressed with the 'communications' which came through her 'controls' or spirit guides, the names of which have become famous in the history of psychical research: 'Chlorine,' an Indian girl; 'Phinuit,' a French doctor; 'George Pelham,' a friend of Dr. Hodgson; 'Hannah Wild,' and even 'Longfellow,' 'Bach,' 'Mrs. Siddons,' and the 'Imperator' group of Stainton Moses.<sup>1</sup> These guides 'controlled' at different periods of Mrs. Piper's mediumship, though some operated concurrently.

Dr. Richard Hodgson went to America specially to see Mrs. Piper and spent seven years in testing and checking the accuracy of her trance messages, many of which were found to be veridical. After Hodgson's death, Mrs. Piper was investigated by Dr. James H. Hyslop, 'Hodgson' himself becoming one of the 'communicators.' Others who studied this medium were Sir Oliver Lodge, Professor William Romaine Newbold, F. W. H. Myers, J. G. Piddington, Sir William Barrett and Professor Charles Richet, who had one sitting only, and was informed that, as a child, he possessed a dog named 'Dick.' This was true.

## MRS. PIPER'S PHENOMENA

Mrs. Piper's successes were due to the intimate and personal nature of her 'communications,' when in trance. For example, 'Dr. Phinuit' gave accurate details of the death of Sir Oliver Lodge's father-in-law. Similar convincing evidence was given concerning Sir Oliver's uncles and aunt Ann. Again, Professor James's mother-in-law had her lost bank

<sup>1</sup> 'Mrs. Piper and the Imperator Band of Controls,' by A. W. Trethewy, *Proc., S.P.R.*, Vol. XXXV, Part 95, pp. 445-65.

book restored to her through 'Phinuit,' who told her exactly where it could be found. On another occasion the same control told Professor James that he had just killed a cat with ether. He concluded: 'The wretched animal spun round and round a long time before dying,' which was correct. A thousand similar instances could be given. Some of the 'communications' were so detailed and involved that weeks or even months had to be spent on their verification. The greatest precautions were taken against the medium acquiring, by normal means, information which could afterwards be given through her 'controls.' On one occasion, detectives were employed to shadow her. During her first visit to England in 1889-90, when she gave eighty-eight sittings, hundreds of statements, many of an intimate nature concerning sitters, afterwards proved to be true, were given by her various 'guides.' It was considered absolutely impossible for the medium to have acquired such information normally.

There is a very considerable literature concerning Mrs. Piper, the perusal of which is sufficient to convince the greatest sceptic of the paranormal origin of her trance utterances. The *Proceedings* and *Journal* of the British S.P.R. contain many papers and reports<sup>1</sup> on sittings with Mrs. Piper. Further records are to be found in the publications of the American S.P.R. Other works which should be consulted are *Mrs. Piper and the Society for Psychical Research*, by Michel Sage,<sup>2</sup> and *The Life and Work of Mrs. Piper*,<sup>3</sup> by her daughter, Alta. To conclude, it is not an exaggeration to state that the phenomena of Mrs. Piper were chiefly responsible for the firm establishment of psychical research in both England and America during a period when ridicule and scepticism were almost strangling the new science. Mrs. M. M. Soule ('Mrs. Chenoweth'), another American trance medium, is comparable with Mrs. Piper in many ways, and the alleged spirits of many eminent people communicated through her.

<sup>1</sup> See especially *Proc.*, Vol. VI, pp. 436-659; Vol. VIII, pp. 1-167; Vol. XIII, pp. 284-582; Vol. XVI, pp. 1-649; Vol. XXIII, pp. 2-285; Vol. XXIV, pp. 31-200; Vol. XXVIII, pp. 1-657. See also *Proc.*, Vol. XLI, pp. 45-6, for complete list of papers on Mrs. Piper to June 1932.

<sup>2</sup> New York, 1904 (translated from the French).

<sup>3</sup> London, 1929.

## 'THE BRITISH MRS. PIPER'

Mrs. Gladys Osborne Leonard is as celebrated to-day as Mrs. Piper was in the early years of the S.P.R. It was she who provided much of the evidence for the alleged continued existence of Raymond, Sir Oliver Lodge's son, who was killed in the Great War on September 14, 1915. In her autobiography,<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Leonard tells us that even as a child she saw visions. Later, she became a singer, a profession she abandoned as her mediumistic faculty developed.

Mrs. Leonard's chief 'control' is 'Feda,' a young native Indian girl spirit who speaks in broken English through the lips of the entranced medium. It was 'Feda' who informed Lady Lodge, eleven days after her son's death, that 'Raymond' was 'communicating.' Later, Vout Peters, with other mediums, supplied further evidence as to Raymond's identity and survival.

A feature of the 'Raymond' story is the fact that Vout Peters—or his control—became cognizant (September 27, 1915) of a photograph of a group of officers, taken at the front, August 24, 1915, in which Raymond was included. The existence of this photograph was unknown to the Lodge family. On December 3, 1915, Mrs. Leonard—or 'Feda'—gave considerable details of this picture. She stated that Raymond carried a cane; that a brother officer had a hand on his shoulder, etc. When Sir Oliver received a copy of this photograph on December 7 following, the accuracy of the mediumistic description of it was confirmed—a brilliant example of psychic 'lucidity,' though not of spirit communication. As Charles Richet points out:<sup>2</sup> 'If we accept the two facts—that some mediums are aware of things that normal channels cannot convey—and that they tend to group both normal and supernormal knowledge round real or imaginary personalities, that amply suffices to explain everything.' He contends that the mediums' subconsciousness has 'invented the personality of Raymond—imaginary in the sense that Raymond no longer exists, real in the sense

<sup>1</sup> *My Life in Two Worlds*, London, 1931.

<sup>2</sup> *Thirty Years of Psychological Research*, pp. 215-16.



that round this auto-suggestion they have grouped many actual facts that their normal senses could not have supplied. For, finally, if Raymond were really speaking by the intermediary of Feda, why should he be so reticent of proofs? Why, in such messages, are there so many obscure and symbolical allusions, and why so many words? Why so few names, dates, and precise remembrances?' Assuming that Mrs. Leonard acquires knowledge paranormally, she could have just as easily supplied details of the photograph, whether Raymond were alive or dead. Sir Oliver Lodge's story<sup>1</sup> of Raymond has been much criticized.<sup>2</sup> The immediate effect of the publication of the work was to make Mrs. Leonard famous, almost in a night. People clamoured for sittings with her and her services were bespoken for years ahead. Another effect due to *Raymond* was the acceptance of 'survival' by tens of thousands of persons who were previously 'unbelievers.' This was on account of the acute emotional stress caused by the war.

#### UNCONVINCING NEWSPAPER TESTS

I cannot close this notice of Mrs. Leonard without mentioning the book and newspaper tests, a curious technique which has caused considerable controversy. The Rev. Charles Drayton Thomas has been responsible for recording<sup>3</sup> many of these tests through Mrs. Leonard. At some time during the previous day, the medium—or 'Feda'—suggests to the sitter that he should look in a certain position in the next morning's issue of a specified newspaper (e.g. *The Times*) or on a particular page in a certain book (the exact location of which is given) in his bookcase, where he will find references to names, dates or places bearing on the affairs of his deceased or living friends or relatives: references which the sitter will recognize as being highly significant. As a control,

<sup>1</sup> *Raymond, or Life after Death*, London, 1916.

<sup>2</sup> For example: *Some Impressions of a Reader of 'Raymond,'* by C. C. Martindale, London, 1917; *Some Revelations as to 'Raymond,'* London [c. 1916.]

<sup>3</sup> *Some New Evidence for Human Survival*, London, 1922. See also 'An Examination of Book-Tests obtained in Sittings with Mrs. Leonard,' by Mrs. H. Sidgwick, *Proc., S.P.R.*, Vol. XXXI, pp. 241-400.

the record of the sitting is *at once* posted to a third party, being often received the same evening. The next morning's *Times* is duly consulted (or the book is found and examined) and often, by the exercise of some imagination, the cryptic references of the medium—or her 'guide'—are confirmed. I reiterate that imagination is required for this particular 'game.' The 'successes' have been many, but successes can also be scored if no medium is involved, as I have myself proved. The implication in these 'newspaper tests' is that a spirit control, twenty-four hours before a paper is printed, is able to predict that certain references will appear, for example, in the birth, death, or personal columns of the next issue, and the position of such references. There is no question of collusion between the newspaper employees and the medium: it is simply a matter of chance, accident, and the right interpretation (according to whether one is a 'believer' or sceptic) of the 'evidence' to suit the purposes of the experiment. Fortunately, Mrs. Leonard's reputation does not rest on her successes in these unconvincing tests. That this medium is able to acquire information through channels other than normal is undeniable, and she has been called the 'British Mrs. Piper' with considerable truth.<sup>1</sup>

#### 'IRWIN' EXPLAINS THE R101 DISASTER

Like Mrs. Leonard, Mrs. Eileen Garrett is a British trance medium, also with an exotic 'control' named 'Uvani,' the alleged spirit of an Arab. Though Mrs. Garrett is now principally known for her work at Duke and other American universities, she came into prominence when the airship R101 crashed in flames near Beauvais, France, in the early morning of Sunday, October 5, 1930. Her commander, Flight-Lieutenant H. C. Irwin, was among those who perished.

On Thursday, October 2, 1930, I booked Mrs. Garrett for a séance in my laboratory on the following Tuesday after-

<sup>1</sup> For an excellent report, typical of Mrs. Leonard's mediumship, see 'On a Series of Sitzings with Mrs. Osborne Leonard,' by Miss Radclyffe-Hall, and (Una) Lady Troubridge, *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. XXX, pp. 339-554.

noon (October 7). The sitting was held as arranged and almost immediately Uvani announced in broken English, and through the lips of the entranced medium, that Lieutenant Irwin wished to communicate. This was about sixty hours after the disaster.

The medium's voice suddenly changed and the entity 'Irwin' gave us a detailed and highly technical account of how the airship crashed, why it crashed, and what was wrong with it. At the subsequent public inquiry, presided over by Sir John Simon, some of 'Irwin's' statements were found to be correct. The following séance utterances were later *proved to be facts*: 'Bulk of the dirigible was too much for her engine capacity'; 'Engines too heavy'; 'Useful lift too small'; 'Gross lift computed badly'; 'Elevator jammed' (probable); 'Flying too low altitude'; 'Load too great for long flight'; 'Cruising speed bad and ship badly swinging'; 'Severe tension on fabric, which is chafing'; 'Starboard strakes started'; 'Never reached cruising altitude'; 'Air-screws too small' (probable); 'Impossible to rise'; 'Cannot trim.' 'Irwin' made many other comments, complaints, and suggestions.

#### 'IRWIN' REVEALS AN OFFICIAL SECRET

Mrs. Garrett—or 'Irwin'—made one remarkable statement at this séance. She said: 'This exorbitant scheme of carbon and hydrogen is entirely and absolutely wrong.' At the time of the R101 flight a series of experiments was contemplated with the idea of burning a mixture of hydrogen and oil fuel (i.e. hydro-carbon). The hydrogen would have been obtained from the gas bags and the carbon from the oil fuel of the ship. No experiments had actually taken place but a gas main had been laid from the gas plant to the engine test-house. This proposed scheme was unknown outside official circles, and its sudden revelation by an entranced woman medium in a London séance-room was startling. The history of these experiments was later communicated to us by an officer in close touch with the building of the airship.

Another statement that 'Irwin' made, in referring to the

falling airship, was: 'We almost scraped the roofs at Achy.' Achy is a small village twelve and a half miles north of Beauvais and was not mentioned in any Press report of the disaster. It is not named in any guide book, or on the ordinary maps of France. But it *was* discovered on the special large-scale ordnance flying maps similar to the one Lieutenant Irwin was using. At the official R101 inquiry two French officers stated that when the airship passed over Poix (fourteen miles north of Achy), she was only three hundred feet from the ground—thus confirming the séance information.

It is inconceivable that Mrs. Garrett could have acquired the R101 information through normal channels and the case<sup>1</sup> strongly supports the hypothesis of 'survival.' As an argument for spirit communication it is much more convincing than the evidence provided by 'Raymond' through various mediums. Telepathy between the living will not cover the facts, though some sort of nexus between the living and the dead would. No one present at the séance was consciously thinking of the R101 disaster, and no one had any technical knowledge of airships. Immediately the Irwin entity disappeared, 'Uvani' announced that 'Sir Arthur Conan Doyle' wished to manifest. I had a long 'conversation' with 'Sir Arthur' which was intensely interesting, but not very convincing.<sup>2</sup>

#### DR. TILLYARD'S DEATH CORRECTLY PREDICTED

It is one thing for a medium to impart information concerning past events; it is another thing altogether to receive predictions concerning the future, which can be verified scientifically. But this is what happened at a sitting I had with the well-known French psychometrist and *clairvoyante*, Mlle Jeanne Laplace, held in Paris on July 7, 1928.

This séance was arranged by the late Dr. Eugène Osty<sup>3</sup> at his house in the Avenue Niel, where I found the medium,

<sup>1</sup> Which should be read in detail. See *Leaves From a Psychist's Case-Book*, by Harry Price, London, 1930, pp. 118-32.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 99-117.

<sup>3</sup> Who died on August 20, 1938, aged 63.

with other guests. My host's sister-in-law (who took shorthand notes of all that was said), the medium and I withdrew to another room and I was requested to give Mlle Laplace a document, photograph, or other article. Mlle Laplace does not go into a trance, and has no 'spirit guide' or 'control.' She just chats with her sitter.

I had a number of letters in my pocket and, at random, handed one to her. It was from Dr. Robin John Tillyard, F.R.S., the distinguished entomologist, who lived at Canberra, working for the Australian Government. He was then touring the world. The letter had been sent from Canada and was dated June 6, 1928. It was of an azure blue colour, and *folded* with the blank sheet outwards. The inside was not visible, and there was nothing to indicate whether it was a written, typed, or printed document.

I handed the letter to Mlle Laplace, who held it flat between her two palms, and did not even glance at it. I did not speak during the séance which, of course, was held in full daylight.

With very little hesitation, the medium reeled off, in quick succession, fifty-three 'impressions,' which were taken down verbatim and numbered. Out of these fifty-three, forty-two were correct or reasonably correct. I could verify some of them myself, and Dr. Tillyard confirmed the rest. She said that the letter was typewritten; that the writer was 'a doctor and a scientist'; that he was not in good health; that 'arterio-sclerosis is indicated'; that he was 'in London now'; that he 'comes from America,' etc., etc. Mlle Laplace also 'saw' the word '*Rebec*.' The letter was actually written from the Château Frontenac Hotel, Quebec.

And now for the prediction: in Impression 30, the medium stated that the writer of the letter 'has not a long life to live—not very many years.' Dr. Tillyard was then forty-seven and a half years old,<sup>1</sup> a comparatively young man. Though he was in ill-health, a medical board had just previously informed him that he was fit enough for a long lease of useful activity.

In Impression 23, Mlle Laplace made the definite statement: 'The writer will die through a railroad or automobile accident; *wheels or rails are bad for him*.'<sup>2</sup> In Impression 49

<sup>1</sup> He was born on January 31, 1881.

<sup>2</sup> My italics.

the medium reiterated the danger from wheels or rails. She said: 'Will have a tragic death—*congestion of the brain* and will fall on railway *or under car*.'<sup>1</sup> What neither the medium nor I knew at the time of the séance was the fact that, in 1913, Dr. Tillyard was badly injured in a railway accident on the North Shore Line and was laid up for two years. 'He had suffered concussion, a broken arm, and severe back injuries.'<sup>2</sup> Some years later, in Nelson, New Zealand, he was involved in a motor-car accident, his left arm being fractured. Subsequently, he suffered a fractured rib in a motor accident in America.<sup>2</sup>

On January 13, 1937, Mlle Laplace's prediction was fulfilled to the letter. On January 12 Dr. Tillyard, his daughter Hope, and a Miss Brenda Cornforth were motoring between Canberra and Sydney. Dr. Tillyard was driving. The car skidded and overturned when it was approaching Barber's Bridge, a mile from Yarra, near Goulburn. The doctor was badly injured and was found to be suffering from paralysis, as his head had been forced through the wind-screen, causing concussion. He died in Goulburn District Hospital the next day, January 13.<sup>3</sup>

I consider the Tillyard case, together with the *Daily Mail* episode of Stella C., the best examples of prevision or fulfilled predictions, as they are both so fully documented. Immediately after the Laplace séance I wrote an article on the experiment which, together with the verbatim 'impressions,' was sent to New York. The article, complete with prediction, was published in the following September.<sup>4</sup> A feature of this case is that throughout the sitting (as Mlle Laplace afterwards admitted) the medium was obsessed with the feeling of danger from wheels or travelling on wheels. It is quite certain that she somehow sensed Tillyard's various accidents.

On my return to London from Paris I informed Dr. Tillyard of Mlle Laplace's dire predictions, but his only remark was that 'these things never come true!'

<sup>1</sup> My italics.

<sup>2</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, January 13, 1937.

<sup>3</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, January 13, 1937. See also *The Times* for January 14, 1937, and *Nature* for January 30, 1937.

<sup>4</sup> *Journal of the Am. S.P.R.*, September, 1928, pp. 492-5.

I have held other experiments with Mlle Laplace and in each case the lucidity shown was brilliant. For instance, from handling a small passport photograph of a young girl she was successful in determining the Christian name of the original, together with the name of the family doctor, and other facts *unknown to me*<sup>1</sup>—excellent examples of lucidity, clairvoyance, cryptæsthesia or extra-sensory perception. But no proof whatever that such information was the result of 'spirit' intervention.

There was also no evidence for spirits in the remarkable sitting I had with a Silesian peasant *clairvoyante*, aged twelve, with whom I experimented in Warsaw in August, 1923, within two hours of my arrival in the capital. Her name was Anna Pilch, and she was introduced to me by Professor Adam Zoltowski, of Posen University, who acted as interpreter. I did not say a word. Anna reeled off the following 'impressions': that when I was a little boy I fell down and broke my left forearm; that soon after I had a violent 'shock' on a boat; that I 'lived in a square house by a river', and many other facts of a personal nature. Everything that Anna said was true, and not a living person but myself knew of some of the facts as she related them. I assumed that she 'tapped' my subconscious mind, as I had completely forgotten some of the incidents she told me.

#### 'SPIRIT' MESSAGES FROM A LIVING MAN

It is not always that mediums relay messages from the deceased. Occasionally, the supposed dead person 'communicating' is found to be alive and well! The classic example of this is the Gordon Davis case, so thoroughly reported by Mr. S. G. Soal.<sup>2</sup> The medium in question was Mrs. Blanche Cooper, a well-known psychic through whom both mental and physical phenomena (including the 'direct voice') occur. In 1921-2 Mr. Soal had numerous séances with Mrs. Cooper, at which his brother, killed in the Great

<sup>1</sup> For details, see *Journal*, Am. S.P.R., April, 1927, pp. 185-92.

<sup>2</sup> 'A Report on Some Communications Received Through Mrs. Blanche Cooper,' *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. XXXV, 1926, pp. 471-594.

War, purported to manifest. A friend, Gordon Davis, whom Soal believed also to have fallen in the war, likewise 'communicated' *via* the 'direct voice.' Soal had long conversations with 'Gordon Davis.' They discussed incidents of their childhood days, some of which Soal had forgotten until his memory was jogged by the communicating spirit. Certain of the facts were quite unknown to Soal, but he confirmed them later. Even the séance voice had characteristics reminiscent of his friend. 'Gordon Davis' sent messages to his wife and child, and 'Nada,' Mrs. Cooper's 'control,' described in detail the house and furnishings in which she said his wife and child were then living.

The sequel to these experiments was startling and rather amusing. Early in 1925 Soal discovered that Gordon Davis was alive and quite ignorant of any séance experiments or 'spirit communications.' Not the least interesting part of this extraordinary case is the fact that the interior of the house which 'Nada' so accurately described exactly corresponded with one which the real Gordon Davis occupied *twelve months after the séance*, but which was quite unknown to him or to Soal at the time of the sitting at which the spirit 'Gordon Davis' manifested.

It is very difficult to know what to make of this case, and it complicates the whole question of survival. Was it an 'impersonating spirit' having a little fun at the expense of Davis, Soal, and the medium? If so, this real spirit must have tapped the minds of all concerned, besides accurately predicting what sort of pictures Davis was going to buy when he settled in his new house. Such cases are infuriating when one is trying to discover a formula which will cover all the facts. Both voice mediums and voice phenomena are usually unsatisfactory, but in the case of Gordon Davis it is quite certain that Mrs. Cooper transmitted real information acquired paranormally, thus differing from the pseudo-spiritual 'messages' of Hélène Smith in Flournoy's *Des Indes à la planète Mars*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Paris and Geneva, 1900.



## THE AUTOMATISTS

Paranormal information furnished by mediums is obtained in various ways, each psychic employing a certain technique, such as the trance, the crystal, psychometrizing, automatic writing, etc. There is no question that most of the automatic writing which has been published is the product of the subconscious, unconscious, or subliminal minds of the automatists concerned, and many of them admit that this is so.

There have been several distinguished automatists including Mrs. A. W. Verrall, her daughter (Mrs. W. H. Salter), Miss Geraldine Cummins, 'Mrs. Holland' (pseudonym),<sup>1</sup> and Mrs. Hester Dowden (i.e. Mrs. Hester Travers Smith).

Mrs. Verrall's automatisms were largely associated with the 'cross-correspondence' experiments which I mentioned<sup>2</sup> in the chapter on the S.P.R. A full account of these can be found in the publications of this society and it makes fascinating reading. The considered opinion of Mrs. Verrall, after years of experimentation, was that at least some of the communications received through her hand came from the spirit world.

Miss Geraldine Cummins is widely known as the 'automatic' author of *The Scripts of Cleophas*,<sup>3</sup> a narrative dealing with the history of the early Christian Church, parts of which were written sometimes at the extraordinary speed of nearly 2,000 words per hour. Further books<sup>4</sup> are continuations of the scripture story. Most of these automatic scripts were produced independently, but some early work was written in conjunction with Mr. Bligh Bond. F. W. H. Myers is alleged to be the communicator in Miss Cummins's more recent works.

<sup>1</sup> 'On the Automatic Writing of Mrs. Holland,' and 'Second Report,' both by Alice Johnson, *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. XXI, pp. 166-391; and Vol. XXIV, pp. 201-63.

<sup>2</sup> p. 57.

<sup>3</sup> London [1928]. See also *Concerning the Cleophas Scripts*, by the same author, London [1930].

<sup>4</sup> *Paul in Athens; The Great Days of Ephesus; Beyond Human Personality; The Road to Immortality*, all published in London.

## THE 'RETURN' OF OSCAR WILDE

Mrs. Hester Dowden, like Miss Cummins, is a distinguished automatist who has produced writings purporting to be the work of discarnate entities—in particular one by 'Oscar Wilde.' This script was written in conjunction with Mr. S. G. Soal (himself an automatist), who actually held the pencil, which moved at a great speed. Certain characteristics of Wilde's calligraphy are apparent in the script writing, and specimens of both are printed in the published report.<sup>1</sup> The literary style of the script also has correspondences with Wilde's work; and, more convincing, certain names and places recorded in the scripts were afterwards found to be connected intimately with Wilde, though it is certain that they were quite unknown to the conscious minds of the automatists.<sup>2</sup>

Another 'message' from 'Oscar Wilde' was obtained by Mr. Soal, with Miss Helen McGregor touching his hand. The automatist distracted his conscious attention during the writing by concentrating his mind on a mathematical problem. The 'message'<sup>3</sup> is really a long essay, the style of which was analysed by Mr. C. W. Soal, the brother of the automatist, and is judged to be the best imitation of the real Wilde so far produced; an opinion which was also held by Mrs. Henry Sidgwick, in her review<sup>4</sup> of the case. In the script, 'Wilde' reveals profound unhappiness and describes himself as 'one of the ignoble dupes for whom Destiny herself has no doom while the very Fates have forgotten us.'

Mr. C. W. Soal has written a critical and authoritative analysis<sup>5</sup> both as regards handwriting and style, of the 'Oscar Wilde' scripts, certainly the best that has been published. The possible sources of many of the veridical

<sup>1</sup> *Psychic Messages from Oscar Wilde*, edited by Mrs. Travers Smith, London [1924].

<sup>2</sup> But the probable sources of several passages were later discovered. See 'Note on the "Oscar Wilde" Script,' by S. G. Soal, *Journal of the S.P.R.*, July, 1926, pp. 110-12.

<sup>3</sup> 'A New Message From Oscar Wilde,' *Occult Review*, November, 1923.

<sup>4</sup> *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. XXXIV, pp. 186-96.

<sup>5</sup> 'The Oscar Wilde Script: A Critique,' *Psychic Science*, Vol. II, No. 4, January, 1924.

incidents attributed to Oscar Wilde were traced to various nineteenth-century memoirs and autobiographies which the automatist may have read, or merely glanced at. It is shown that the handwriting is that of S. G. Soal diluted with mannerisms which he may subconsciously have picked up from a facsimile holograph letter by Wilde. And important light is thrown upon the genesis of certain of the stylistic resemblances.

#### THE MARGARET VELEY CASE

Other remarkable automatic scripts were those produced by S. G. Soal (under the pseudonym of 'Mr. V.') with Miss Hood touching the back of his hand. They deal with trivial details of the life and friends of Margaret Veley (1843-87), the Victorian poet and novelist, who spent much of her life at Braintree, Essex. Most of the facts were verified by Mr. W. H. Salter, who got into touch with Miss Veley's surviving friends. Verses were also given purporting to emanate from Margaret Veley, but the style of these did not greatly resemble that of her published work. A possibility is that the automatist had, during his childhood spent in Essex, assimilated the contents of old newspapers. But this cannot be definitely proved.<sup>1</sup>

#### A CONVINCING SÉANCE

Mrs. Hester Dowden, like the majority of mediums, has a number of spirit 'controls'—mostly exotic personalities. An Irishman, an Egyptian priest, a Hindoo, and 'Johannes,' a student, are among those who have 'communicated' through this psychic. That Mrs. Dowden is as successful at private séances as she is when producing scripts is proved by a case which I carefully investigated.

Mrs. Grace Dribbell arranged, through a friend, a sitting with Mrs. Dowden. No name was given and Mrs. Dribbell

<sup>1</sup> For details of this case, see 'Some Automatic Scripts Purporting to be Inspired by Margaret Veley,' by W. H. Salter and [S. G. Soal], *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. XXXVIII, pp. 281-374. See also 'The Margaret Veley Case, and Survival,' by René Sudre, *Journal*, Am. S.P.R., Vol. XXIII, 1929, pp. 380-5.

had never previously seen the medium, who, it is certain, did not know the identity of her sitter. The séance was held at Mrs. Dowden's house on March 8, 1933. The medium asked no questions, and the sitter gave her no information. Full notes were taken and Mrs. Dribbell was afterwards handed the original scripts.

By means of the ouija board and automatic writing, 'Johannes' introduced various entities who supplied Mrs. Dribbell with the following information: the Christian names of her mother (Susannah), father (Charles), her own name (Grace), and where she lived (Carshalton).

Mrs. Dribbell is an English lady who was married to a native of Holland, so she asked that she should be 'put in touch with' some of her husband's people. Mrs. Dribbell does not know the Dutch language. The ouija board spelt out 'Leman' (her brother-in-law), 'Lies' (i.e. Louisa, his wife's pet name), 'Lili' (his daughter), 'Jan Stokvis' (the name of Lili's fiancé), and 'Anna' (Jan's mother).

The medium then wrote the words 'Liesje,' 'Jacob,' *moeder* and 'cancer,' purporting to come through the entity 'Leman,' who said that he died of 'heart trouble' four years previously, when he was living at Bussum, near Amsterdam. 'Leman' was asked: 'What was your pet name for me?' Immediately the medium wrote '*Peggy mijn kind*,' the Dutch equivalent of 'Peg o' my heart.' Mrs. Dribbell then asked 'Leman' to write something in Dutch. Mrs. Dowden wrote: '*Ik heb je lief*' (I love you!). 'Leman' then wrote the words 'Lex' (Mrs. Dribbell's husband), 'Jack' (her child), 'Sophie,' 'Marie,' 'Lida'—all relatives of Mr. Dribbell, whose mother died of cancer. *Every name and statement recorded at this séance was correct.* It is true that Mrs. Dribbell was herself cognizant of most of the facts, but not all, and the answers were given with great rapidity. Assuming that in some way the medium extracted much of the information—perhaps by telepathy—from the sitter's subconscious, it was a remarkable achievement. Mrs. Dribbell, who is not a spiritualist, and is quite unemotional, was convinced that she was contacting minds functioning independently of her own and that of the medium.

## 'PATIENCE WORTH'

Another famous automatist, an American, was Mrs. Henry H. Rogers (better known as Mrs. John Howard Curran), who died on December 4, 1937, aged fifty-six years. She had a 'control,' 'Patience Worth,' who stated—*via* the ouija board—that she was the spirit of a young English Puritan girl of the seventeenth century. Outwardly, the medium appeared to be a normal woman, her first husband being a State Immigration Commissioner of St. Louis, Missouri. In 1913, she tried the ouija board and, to her astonishment, 'Patience Worth' communicated that she was going to take up her abode with the Curran family. For the next twenty-five years a spate of novels, parables, poems and other writings were 'dictated' by 'Patience Worth' at a rapid rate, or emanated from the lips of the medium. A life of Christ,<sup>1</sup> running to 640 pages, was produced, parts of it being spelled out at a speed of 5,000 words in one evening. Much of Mrs. Curran's output was of high literary quality and showed considerable erudition. Before she died she adopted an unborn child. It was a girl and was named Patience Worth Curran, now Mrs. George Peters. Dr. W. F. Prince fully investigated this extraordinary case and wrote two long monographs on it.<sup>2</sup>

I cannot close my remarks on automatisms without referring to Mr. F. Bligh Bond's remarkable works, founded on automatic scripts: *The Company of Avalon*,<sup>3</sup> a study of the script of Brother Symon, sub-prior of Winchester Abbey in the time of King Stephen; *The Gate of Remembrance*,<sup>4</sup> 'the story of the psychological experiment which resulted in the discovery of the Edgar Chapel at Glastonbury'; *The Hill of Vision: a forecast of the Great War. . .*<sup>5</sup> This was produced from information obtained between 1909 and 1912, and in 1918, through the hand of John Alleyne, the clever artist and well-known automatist. I have said little about auto-

<sup>1</sup> *The Sorry Tale*. See the article 'Patience Worth,' by Hettie Rhoda Mead, *Journal*, Am. S.P.R., April-May, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> *The Riddle of Patience Worth*, New York, 1926; *The Case of Patience Worth*, by W. F. Prince, Boston, 1927.

<sup>3</sup> Oxford, 1924.

<sup>4</sup> Oxford, 1918.

<sup>5</sup> London, 1919.

matic drawing, painting or speaking as they, too, can be explained usually in terms of the subliminal mind. I have heard a few striking trance addresses by various mediums notably by 'Power,' the 'control' of Mrs. Meurig Morris, who figured in a *cause célèbre* a few years ago.<sup>1</sup>

#### MULTIPLE PERSONALITY

Not the least wonderful miracles of the mind are the cases of split or multiple personality. Though these cases are studied by psychical researchers, they really belong to the field of abnormal psychology—a field which orthodox science has at last begun to till.

One of the most famous cases of dissociation of personality is that recorded by Dr. Morton Prince<sup>2</sup> in 1906. It deals with Miss Beauchamp, who developed no fewer than four personalities, all different, all at war with one another, which ill-health or shock brought successively to the surface of her consciousness. Morton Prince finally effected a 'cure' by means of hypnosis.

Another famous case is the one so laboriously investigated by Dr. W. F. Prince. In 1892 'Doris Fischer,' then aged three, was knocked down by her drunken father. The shock caused by this ill-treatment was responsible for the child developing three distinct personalities, which were labelled the 'real Doris,' 'Margaret,' and 'sleeping Margaret.' Another shock caused by the death of her mother produced a further personality, the 'sick Doris,' and finally a fifth personality ('sleeping Doris') was manifested. It was at this period that Dr. Walter Prince began his investigation and treatment, and in three years he, too, had effected a cure. The various personalities were cognizant of one another, though the real Doris was apparent for only about five minutes per day. This most important case has been fully reported by Dr. W. F. Prince,<sup>3</sup> who adopted 'Doris.' She

<sup>1</sup> Meurig Morris *v.* *The Daily Mail*. See this paper and *The Times* for April 6-20, 1932.

<sup>2</sup> *The Dissociation of a Personality*, New York, 1906.

<sup>3</sup> 'The Doris Case of Multiple Personality,' *Proc., Am. S.P.R.*, Vols. IX-XI, New York, 1915-17.

was afterwards known as Miss Theodosia Prince. Many other cases—some bordering on the pathological—could be cited. One came within my own experience. Before the Great War I was acquainted with a man, a fellow book-collector. We became quite friendly and exchanged duplicates of rare works. I noticed a subtle change coming over him. One day he would be jovial, taking me to a restaurant and showing me his recent 'finds.' He would then wear gay clothes, smoke and drink, and hardly cease talking. Then he began to pass me in the street. He would be dressed in black, and invariably carried a prayer-book under his arm. I made inquiries and found that he had developed a secondary personality. For periods of perhaps twenty-four hours he would become deeply religious, a non-smoker and teetotaler. During this state he began to write a theological work, and cultivated an entirely different set of acquaintances. Then without warning, he would don a suit of plus-fours, telephone me, and we would go to a restaurant, and browse over the latest booksellers' catalogues. In the 'A' personality he would be cheerful and vivacious, and very good company. In the 'B' personality he became morose and bad-tempered and cut all his old friends. Then the war intervened and we drifted apart. I imagine he ended his days in an asylum. Doubtless, the psycho-therapeutic methods of Dr. Morton Prince or Dr. W. F. Prince would have cured him.

In concluding this chapter on the most famous mental mediums of the past fifty years, I must mention Mrs. R. Thompson, the British trance medium, who was 'controlled' by the spirit of her daughter Nelly. Dr. Hodgson, Mr. Piddington, F. van Eden, Mrs. Verrall, F. W. H. Myers, and others had many sittings, often with satisfactory results.<sup>1</sup> The American medium, Mrs. Etta Wriedt, also had considerable psychic powers. She is a 'voice' medium and impressed such men as Sir William Barrett and Usborne Moore.

Last, but not least, I have to record the remarkable cryptæsthesia of Miss Nell St. John Montague (Mrs. Standish-Barry), of South Kensington. Miss Montague uses a crystal and has scored many successes. I have not sat with her

<sup>1</sup> See *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vols. XVII, XVIII, and *Journal*, Vol. XI.

myself, but several persons (including the late Hon. Everard Feilding) have reported to me favourably concerning her. Dr. R. F. Korte, of Hameln-am-Weser, wrote me on March 29, 1936, that his cousin had visited Miss Montague, who accurately described his (Dr. Korte's) house and household; had mentioned many true details of his cousin's husband, an incident that occurred to him in Portugal, and other intimate information. Dr. Korte concludes: 'To my cousin's conviction everything Miss Montague has told her corresponds absolutely with the facts of the past and coincides with happenings of the future.' This was an excellent result obtained by a complete stranger, and with this brilliant example of Miss Montague's work, I will conclude my account of the 'famous mental mediums.'



## CHAPTER X

### THE STORY OF E.S.P.

'EXTRA-SENSORY perception' (E.S.P.) is merely the latest and now fashionable term for telepathy, clairvoyance, thought-transference and allied alleged faculties. I must qualify the word 'latest' as in the 'First Report on Thought-Reading,'<sup>1</sup> by Barrett, Gurney and Myers, the term *supersensuous perception* was employed. This was in July, 1882.

Though the S.P.R. was founded in 1882, Professor (later Sir William) Barrett and his friends had been conducting experiments in 'thought-reading' for many months previously—probably the first serious experiments in mental phenomena organized in any country.<sup>2</sup> Among his subjects were five young girls, between the ages of ten and seventeen, 'all thoroughly healthy . . . and perfectly simple and child-like.'<sup>3</sup> These were the Misses Creery, four of whom, with a young maidservant, 'were frequently able to designate correctly, without contact or sign, a card or other object fixed on' in their absence.

#### THE CLEVER CREERY CHILDREN

The Creery girls were the daughters of a clergyman, the Rev. A. M. Creery, of Buxton. During Easter, 1881, Sir William conducted a series of experiments with the girls, one of whom was sent out of the room. On a piece of paper Sir William then wrote, successively, the names of a number of common household objects, which he showed to the other

<sup>1</sup> *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. I, 1882-3, pp. 13-34.

<sup>2</sup> Sir William Barrett tells us (*Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. XXXIV, p. 275) that he 'began a serious and systematic investigation of psychical phenomena' in June, 1874.

<sup>3</sup> 'First Report,' op. cit., p. 20.

members of the family, who were present. Such words as hair-brush, wine-glass, etc., were recorded. Then the girl was called in and proceeded to 'guess'—correctly—the names of the various articles, with few errors.<sup>1</sup> At a second series of experiments, conducted by Myers and Gurney, held on April 13, 1882, playing-cards were employed. By this time, it had apparently dawned on the investigators that a code or collusion might have been used by these clever children. We are told that 'the experimenters took every precaution [not recorded] in order that no indication, however slight, should reach the child' percipient. And yet this girl 'with downcast eyes' guessed many of the playing-cards first time; guessed the names of objects such as 'box of almonds,' 'white penknife,' etc. Gurney and Myers were impressed.

In a leading article in *Nature*<sup>2</sup> it was once emphasized that 'the first necessity [for the investigation of alleged abnormal phenomena] is a thorough knowledge of the art of mystification.' Messrs. Barrett, Myers and Gurney did *not* possess such knowledge and, for years, the Creery children—and the serving maid!—appear to have fooled them by codes to be found in any shilling conjuring book. At some sittings in Cambridge, in 1887, attended by Professor and Mrs. Sidgwick, two of the children were detected<sup>3</sup> signalling the suits of the cards by slight head movements, scraping of the feet, coughing, etc. One of the girls finally confessed to 'a certain amount of signalling in earlier experiments.'<sup>4</sup> And yet these simple tricks had deceived such men as Barrett, Myers, Gurney, Professor Balfour Stewart, Professor Alfred Hopkinson, etc. A good account of the Creery experiments is to be found in *Phantasms of the Living*,<sup>5</sup> but as this was written before the exposure, its only value is to show how easily scientists can be hoodwinked.

<sup>1</sup> *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. I, 1882.

<sup>2</sup> For February 9, 1929.

<sup>3</sup> *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. V, 1888-9, p. 269.

<sup>4</sup> *Journal*, S.P.R., Vol. III, October, 1887, p. 164.

<sup>5</sup> By Gurney, Myers, and Podmore, London, 1886. Vol. I, pp. 20-31. See also *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. I, pp. 70-8.

## THE BLACKBURN-SMITH FIASCO

Another thought-reading investigation which ended in a fiasco was the Blackburn-Smith partnership. These two young Brighton men, Douglas Blackburn and G. A. Smith, semi-professional 'telepathists,' submitted their powers to a number of psychical researchers, including Myers and Gurney. They worked together, just as the Zancigs, the Trees, the Zomahs, and other vaudeville thought-readers did in later years. Smith, blindfolded, would seat himself at a table, while Blackburn, outside the room, would be shown some geometrical design drawn on a sheet of paper. Blackburn would then enter the room and stand behind Smith, who proceeded to trace on a piece of paper the 'impressions' of the drawing which, he said, he received from Blackburn's mind.<sup>1</sup> When the control conditions were really tightened up (as for example in an experiment described by Sir James Crichton-Browne)<sup>2</sup> the 'telepathists' failed. Blackburn finally confessed<sup>3</sup> that the good results were obtained by codes and other trickery. He writes: 'I am the sole survivor of that group of experimenters and no harm can be done to anyone. . . . I, with mingled feelings of regret and satisfaction, now declare that the whole of the alleged experiments were bogus, and originated in the honest desire of two youths to show how easily men of scientific mind and training could be deceived when seeking for evidence in support of a theory they were wishful to establish.' A full description of all the tricks and codes was given. Smith denied Blackburn's allegations. He could hardly do otherwise considering that during the interval between the original experiments and the 'confession' Smith had closely collaborated with the S.P.R. as hypnotist in some telepathic experiments<sup>4</sup> conducted by the Sidgwicks, using various subjects. In these experiments at guessing numbers, and visualizing scenes, the subjects

<sup>1</sup> For details and drawings, see *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. I, 1883, pp. 161-215.

<sup>2</sup> In the *Westminster Gazette*, January 29, 1908.

<sup>3</sup> *John Bull*, December 5 to January 9, 1909; *Daily News*, September 1, 1911; 'Confessions of a "Telepathist"', *Journal*, S.P.R., Vol. XV, pp. 115-32.

<sup>4</sup> 'Experiments in Thought Transference' by Prof. and Mrs. H. Sidgwick, and Mr. G. A. Smith, *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. VI, pp. 128-70.

were, apparently, very successful. But Mr. S. G. Soal, in a brilliant analysis<sup>1</sup> of this case, proves that it would have been as easy for Smith to have used a code during the Sidgwick experiments as it was for Blackburn when he deceived Myers and Gurney. Here we have two professional entertainers, one of whom eventually revealed his complete bag of tricks. His partner continues in the business. Is it not reasonable to suppose that *his* 'miracles,' too, can also be explained in terms of normality? I doubt if any of those who experimented with Blackburn and Smith knew that as early as 1884 the former showman had written an illuminating work<sup>2</sup> on 'thought reading.'

The pages of the S.P.R. publications are full of papers on telepathy—theoretical, experimental, spontaneous. Convenient lists of the principal papers have been published.<sup>3</sup> Some of the experimental tests appear—on the surface—to be impressive, but few will bear scientific analysis (as for example the Guthrie series<sup>4</sup>) and *not one* is capable of being duplicated successfully in a laboratory under properly controlled conditions. There is much food for thought in this fact when we consider that the S.P.R. has been functioning for more than fifty years.

#### TELEPATHIC POWERS OF A CLASSICIST

Perhaps the most interesting story of thought-transference is the account so dramatically interpolated by Professor Gilbert Murray in his Presidential Address<sup>5</sup> to the S.P.R. on July 9, 1915. He had been discussing Bergson's philosophy in regard to telepathy, when he remarked: 'What makes me incline to a belief in the transmission of thoughts or impressions by some method different from our normal five senses is chiefly my own experience in telepathy. . . . The

<sup>1</sup> *Experimental Telepathy and Clairvoyance in England, 1881-1933*, London, 1933, in the 'Harry Price Library' in the University of London.

<sup>2</sup> *Thought Reading; or, Modern Mysteries Explained. Being Chapters on Thought-Reading, Occultism, Mesmerism, etc.; forming a key to the Psychological Puzzles of the Day*, by Douglas Blackburn, London [1884].

<sup>3</sup> *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. XLI, pp. 40-3.

<sup>4</sup> *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. I, pp. 263-83.

<sup>5</sup> *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. XXIX, pp. 46-63.

method followed is this: I go out of the room and of course out of earshot. Someone in the room, generally my eldest daughter, thinks of a scene or an incident or anything she likes, and says it aloud. It is written down, and I am called. I come in, usually take my daughter's hand, and then, if I have luck, describe in detail what she has thought of. The least disturbance of our customary method, change of time or place, presence of strangers, controversy, and especially noise, is apt to make things go wrong. I become myself somewhat over-sensitive and irritable, though not, I believe, to a noticeable degree.<sup>1</sup>

Professor Murray then proceeded to detail some experiments, 'where the subconscious impression chose some sense-channel by which to reach me.' His daughter thought of Savonarola at Florence and the people burning their clothes and pictures and valuables in the square. The professor at once thought of 'Italy.' Then he said: 'This is not modern.' At this point he hesitated until a small tarry bit of coal happened to fall out of the fire. This 'clue' made him smell oil or paint burning, and so he got the rest of the scene. In this experiment, the information came through the channel of the sense of smell.

Sometimes the visualization of the thought-of scene came through the sense of sight. Subject set: his daughter's grandfather at the Harrow and Winchester match 'dropping hot cigar-ash on Miss Thompson's parasol.' Professor Murray's *verbatim* answer: 'Why, this is grandfather. He's at a cricket match—why it's absurd: he seems to be dropping ashes on a lady's parasol.'

Similar successes were achieved many times, and the full and detailed report<sup>2</sup> by Mrs. Verrall, of 504 experiments, should be read, together with the 'Appendix'<sup>3</sup> to the same report. A further 259 experiments are later detailed by Mrs. Henry Sidgwick,<sup>4</sup> who described the experiments as 'perhaps the most important ever brought to the notice of the Society.'<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. XXIX, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> 'Report on a Series of Experiments in "Guessing",' *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. XXIX, pp. 64-87.

<sup>3</sup> Appendix, *ibid.*, pp. 87-110.

<sup>4</sup> 'Report on Further Experiments in Thought-Transference carried out by Professor Gilbert Murray,' *Proc.*, Vol. XXXIV, pp. 212-74.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 212.

Of course, hand-in-hand with Professor Murray's claims, went a good deal of criticism. It was suggested that, perhaps unconsciously, he saw his daughter's written description of the scene which, it will be remembered, was recorded on paper. Not only was it written, but the scene or object had first to be *spoken aloud*. Was it possible that Professor Murray possessed—or possesses—super-sensitive ears—i.e. hyperæsthesia of the sense of hearing? The Professor does not claim that his feats are performed by pure telepathy, and he does admit the possibility of hyperæsthesia. But, as Soal points out,<sup>1</sup> if this is the case, it is really incomprehensible 'that the experimenters should never have taken the trouble to test the theory in any way. It might be supposed that the obvious thing to do was to place Professor Murray at varying distances from the person who uttered the message and to have tried the effect of several intervening walls, etc. Yet apparently, no one even accompanied Professor Murray outside the room to see that he "played fair". . . . The records published by the S.P.R. are merely the records of a parlour game, and not of a serious investigation.' Professor R. H. Thouless, the psychologist, in a letter (dated December 17, 1924) to the *Manchester Guardian*<sup>2</sup> also hopes 'that these experiments will not stop at the point of demonstrating that communication of some sort exists. By the ordinary methods of scientific research—isolation and independent variation of all the conditions under which communication takes place—it should not be difficult to settle conclusively all the questions that are still in dispute. Such a research should show whether the results are to be explained by telepathy or by hyperæsthesia.' But this apparently has never been done.

I could cite many more similar experiments to those described above, but there is a sameness about them which becomes almost monotonous. They can be studied in detail in the pages of the S.P.R. publications. Most of the extra-sensory research work has been done in England, though certain foreigners have experimented in the field. Among these are Max Dessoir of Berlin, who sent his results to the

<sup>1</sup> *Experimental Telepathy and Clairvoyance in England*.

<sup>2</sup> Reprinted in *Journal*, S.P.R., Vol. XXII, pp. 51-4.

compilers of *Phantasms of the Living*, where they are illustrated and discussed;<sup>1</sup> René Warcollier<sup>2</sup> of Paris; John Edgar Coover<sup>3</sup> of Stanford University, who obtained 10,000 guesses with 100 students using playing cards; Naum Kotik,<sup>4</sup> the Russian, and many others. The reader can conveniently study the work of all these experimenters in the *Journal* and *Proceedings* of the S.P.R. The brilliant results with Ossowiecki have already been mentioned in these pages.<sup>5</sup> The most impressive experiments, in the opinion of Mr. S. G. Soal, who is the greatest authority on everything pertaining to E.S.P., were those conducted by Professor H. J. F. W. Brugmans, the late Professor G. Heymans, and Dr. A. A. Weinberg with the subject van Dam in the Department of Psychology at Groningen University. In these experiments, the subject was seated behind a curtain, blindfolded, and was only able to push his hand under the curtain to move a piece on a chessboard that was numbered and lettered in the Continental fashion. Brugmans and his assistants sat in a darkened room above and watched van Dam through a glass pane in the ceiling. The experimenters 'willed' van Dam to move the piece to a certain square determined by a random draw of a letter and number from two sets of cards. Nothing of van Dam could be seen except his hand. In 187 trials the subject obtained 60 successes as against 4 that chance would suggest. It was found that alcohol increased the percentage of successes. In the oft-quoted *Experimental Telepathy and Clairvoyance in England*, Soal remarks that 'the English experimenters in telepathy have produced no positive investigations which are at all comparable in scientific precision' with the experiments carried out by Professor Brugmans and his colleagues.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vol. II, pp. 642-53.

<sup>2</sup> *La Télépathie: Recherches Expérimentales*, Paris, 1921.

<sup>3</sup> *Experiments in Psychical Research*, Stanford Univ., Cal., 1917.

<sup>4</sup> *Die Emanation der psycho-physischen Energie*, Wiesbaden, 1908.

<sup>5</sup> Page 41. See also 'An Experiment in "Clairvoyance" with M. Stefan Ossowiecki,' *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. XLI, pp. 345-51. For a criticism, see Soal's *Experimental Telepathy and Clairvoyance*.

<sup>6</sup> For a résumé of these experiments, see *Journal*, S.P.R., December, 1938, pp. 299-302.

## THE UPTON SINCLAIR TESTS

The experiments of Upton Sinclair (*b.* 1878), the famous writer and sociologist deserve special notice. In 1930 he issued a report<sup>1</sup> on these experiments, and it makes astonishing reading. Mrs. Sinclair discovered that she could 'transfer' her thoughts to others and a long series of tests was staged. Mrs. Sinclair was always the 'percipient,' and her husband and other persons acted as 'agents.' The lines of the experiments followed more or less those of the Guthrie, Dessoir and Blackburn-Smith tests, which I have already mentioned. Mr. Sinclair, or another agent, would gaze at and think of a crude drawing of something. Mrs. Sinclair, without seeing it, would, in an adjoining room, attempt to visualize the drawing and reproduce it on paper. Considerable concentration was necessary. Apparently distance was no obstacle, as experiments with her brother-in-law, forty miles away, were also successful. An analysis of the results obtained through the whole series shows a high average of successes. Out of 290 experiments, Mr. Sinclair considers that 23 per cent were successful, 53 per cent were fairly successful, while the remaining 24 per cent were definite failures. It is probable that some of the successes were due to a clairvoyant faculty in addition to a telepathic one. It is to be hoped that the experiments will some day be repeated in the presence of other observers. Other tests carried out in the United States were those staged by the *Scientific American* in 1933 and 1934, with readers as percipients. Results were negative.<sup>2</sup>

## CARD GUESSING

The easiest, most simple, and cheapest way to test whether a person has E.S.P. is by means of cards—especially playing cards—and for this reason they have been used by experimenters from the very earliest days. Very many tests have

<sup>1</sup> *Mental Radio: Does it Work, and How?* London and Los Angeles, 1930.

<sup>2</sup> See *Scientific American*, New York, July, 1933; February, 1934.



been staged by various people, some with striking results, some with poor results. For example, Professor Richet, as early as 1884, made nearly 3,000 tests with people 'guessing' the suits of playing cards. He got poor results.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Miss Ina Jephson, forty years later, staged a very comprehensive test with about 240 people, with most remarkable results—and an equally remarkable sequel.

The persons selected for the experiment were requested to 'guess' twenty-five cards, in their own homes, using their own cards. Miss Jephson thus obtained 6,000 guesses. For her analysis of these guesses, she used the numerical scoring system for playing-cards computed by Dr. R. A. Fisher, F.R.S. This system allows for successes in colour, suit, number and rank of a card, combined into a single average score. When the guesses were analysed, it was found that forty-six people had sent in results far and away above what chance could account for: in other words, if the guesses were honest ones, they must have been due to clairvoyance on the part of the successful percipients. Mr. Soal was not satisfied with this report<sup>2</sup> and insisted that the experiments should be repeated with cards enclosed in light-proof envelopes, and so sealed that fraud, if not impossible, would be difficult. The results of this test, statistically analysed by Mr. Soal himself, were remarkable. The 9,000 guesses recorded by more than 300 persons *showed not the slightest sign of clairvoyance* either on the part of individuals or in the mass; the laws of chance operated in every respect.<sup>3</sup> It was evident that careless recording, experimental error, or conscious or unconscious faking on the part of the subjects or the sending in of only their best results, were responsible for so many 'good' guesses being sent to Miss Jephson.

<sup>1</sup> See 'M. Richet's Recent Researches in Thought-Transference,' by Edmund Gurney, *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. II, pp. 239-57.

<sup>2</sup> 'Evidence for Clairvoyance in Card-Guessing,' by Ina Jephson, *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. XXXVIII, pp. 223-71.

<sup>3</sup> See 'Report of a Series of Experiments in Clairvoyance Conducted at a Distance under Approximately Fraud-Proof Conditions,' *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. XXXIX, pp. 375-414.

## DR. RHINE'S BOMBSHELL

In 1934 a bombshell was dropped into the camp of the sceptics by Dr. Joseph Banks Rhine when the Boston S.P.R. published his *Extra-Sensory Perception*,<sup>1</sup> a report on his experiments in card guessing carried out at Duke University in the Department of Psychology, of which he is an associate professor. An account of these experiments has been recorded in Chapter III. A further report by Dr. Rhine, *New Frontiers of the Mind*<sup>2</sup> is a sequel to *Extra-Sensory Perception* and the former book records the progress made since the earlier work was written.

I must here say a few words about E.S.P. technique, and the special Zener cards used in the experiments. In a shuffled pack of twenty-five cards are five sets of five different symbols, and the person to be tested for E.S.P. is invited to 'call' or 'guess' the symbols on the cards which, one by one, are placed before him, backs upwards.<sup>3</sup> If he does not possess E.S.P., the mean chance expectation of 'good' guesses will, of course, be five. Anything significantly above that average, in a long series of properly conducted tests, will be something more than chance: it will indicate a paranormal faculty—i.e. extra-sensory perception.

The successes with Rhine and his colleagues were phenomenal. For example, a student named Linzmayer, at the first attempt, correctly guessed *nine* cards in succession out of the shuffled pack of twenty-five—a 2,000,000 to 1 chance. The next day he did the same thing! The odds against a person performing such a feat twice in succession are astronomical. Later, a child of twelve made a 'perfect' score, that is, a run of twenty-five correct guesses. The odds against this last miracle being due to chance are 623,360,743,125,120 to 1! Rhine, in his book,<sup>4</sup> may well raise the query as to whether he and his colleagues at Duke 'have been completely and continuously self-deluded or incompetent' in

<sup>1</sup> Republished in London in 1935.

<sup>2</sup> London, 1938.

<sup>3</sup> The clairvoyance test. If telepathy is being tried, the experimenter looks at the card, the subject then guessing what the symbol is.

<sup>4</sup> *New Frontiers of the Mind*, p. 290.

failing to discover if there is a snag in the wonders they are witnessing. I have already mentioned the fact that in London Mr. S. G. Soal has been trying to repeat Rhine's good results, without success, except that in the clairvoyance tests, some people appear to be slightly subnormal—i.e. they score *fewer* than the average five correct guesses (out of the twenty-five cards) which chance should reveal.

Even Rhine's own subjects appear to lose their faculty when they cross the Atlantic. With Mrs. Eileen Garrett at Duke University, Dr. Rhine has recorded<sup>1</sup> some extraordinary results. In the 625 trials at Pure Telepathy she scored 336 correct hits, an average of 13·4 per twenty-five Zener cards. In a series of more than 100,000 guesses (using a random sequence of cards) Mr. Soal 'obtained only a single set of twenty-five with as many as thirteen guesses correct, and no set with more than thirteen correct—a result which is in accordance with chance expectation.'<sup>2</sup> In the same way with the clairvoyant tests, out of 3,525 calls, the successful ones in America numbered 888; that is, 183 *more correct guesses than chance would account for*. In many of these tests with Mrs. Garrett cards with unscreened backs were used.

#### UNIVERSITY COLLEGE EXPERIMENTS

Mr. Soal was so struck with these results that when Mrs. Garrett, who is British, arrived in London, he arranged (May, 1937) some further tests with her. Most of these were carried out in the Psychological Laboratory at University College with advanced students in the Departments of Psychology and Philosophy as assistants. In all, 12,425 guesses were recorded and nothing paranormal was witnessed. In the concluding remarks of his preliminary report,<sup>3</sup> Mr. Soal, in describing the results of his experiments, says: 'In the case of Mrs. Eileen Garrett we fail to find the slightest confirmation of Dr. J. B. Rhine's remarkable claims

<sup>1</sup> *Character and Personality*, London, 1934, Vol. III, No. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. XLV, p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> 'A Repetition of Dr. J. B. Rhine's work with Mrs. Eileen Garrett,' *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. XLV, pp. 69–87. A detailed report of these experiments will be published by Mr. Soal in due course.

relating to her alleged powers of extra-sensory perception. Not only did she fail when I took charge of the experiments, but she failed equally when four other carefully trained experimenters took my place. . . . The more serious question will doubtless arise as to whether Dr. Rhine's other major subjects would fare any better if they crossed the Atlantic.'

Mrs. Garrett also fared badly in the investigation into the physiological changes that were alleged to take place during the trance state of this medium. The psychic Press had been full of stories, emanating from America, that Mrs. Garrett's trance 'controls,' 'Uvani' and 'Abdul Latif' reacted differently, physiologically, from the normal Mrs. Garrett. The implication was, of course, that the medium's controls were separate entities or personalities. Blood counts, coagulation times, respiration, pulse rate, etc., were all stated to be different in the 'controlled' medium from what they were when Mrs. Garrett was out of trance. It was even alleged<sup>1</sup> that the blood of 'Abdul Latif' was the blood of a man in the last stages of diabetes! As Mrs. Garrett happened to be in London, Mrs. K. M. Goldney decided, with the medium's willing co-operation, to test these remarkable statements, and a complete investigation was carried out with the assistance of the following medical specialists: Dr. Geoffrey Bourne, Dr. Cuthbert Dukes, Dr. William Nunan, Dr. V. J. Woolley, and Dr. Helena Wright. The report<sup>2</sup> of this careful inquiry into the alleged paranormal physiological conditions during the trance state of Mrs. Garrett showed that the results were *entirely negative*. As in the case of the American E.S.P. experiments, there were no miracles in London.

#### PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS IN E.S.P.

Why is it that Dr. Rhine at Duke, and a few other investigators (principally in America) are obtaining such amazing results in E.S.P., while we, in England, seem quite unable to find subjects with a paranormal faculty? It is true that one

<sup>1</sup> *Light*, London, May 20, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> 'An Examination into Physiological Changes Alleged to Take Place During the Trance State,' by K. M. Goldney, *Proc., S.P.R.*, Vol. XLV, pp. 43-68.

or two people in Great Britain claim successes in this field, but their work has yet to be repeated independently by scientific workers. Mr. G. N. M. Tyrrell, for instance, has been for many years experimenting in E.S.P. and is one of the very few persons in this country who claim to have obtained positive results in telepathic and clairvoyant experiments on quantitative lines. His principal subject is Miss Gertrude Johnson, an intimate friend. As far back as 1921 Miss Johnson was able, according to Tyrrell, to 'guess' the denominations of the first six or eight cards in a shuffled pack placed face downwards on the table. This feat she repeated many times. Later, Mr. Tyrrell devised a piece of apparatus consisting of five small boxes, padded on the inside, into which, at random, he inserted the end of a pointer, the idea being that the medium should guess in which box the pointer was placed. A screen was between the medium and the experimenter. Out of 30,000 trials, the medium was successful 9,364 times (30.2 per cent) against a chance expectation of 20 per cent. These results have been published in a recent work<sup>1</sup> by Mr. Tyrrell, and his apparatus has also been described and illustrated.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, most of the work with the pointer apparatus may be vitiated by the fact that it is possible for an agent to make his pointer selections accord with the general habits of the guesser, perhaps unconsciously. Indeed, Mr. George W. Fisk has recently demonstrated<sup>3</sup> that using this apparatus he was able to cause almost anybody to score either above or below chance at will by merely watching the way the guesser made his choices and then dodging these position preferences adroitly with the pointer.

If Rhine and Tyrrell can get these—apparently paranormal—results, how is it that Soal has failed to detect any trace of E.S.P. in more than 140 subjects (Indians, Chinese, Egyptians, Greeks, mediums entranced and normal, etc.) doing 120,000 guesses? The Americans say that we Britishers do not possess the requisite 'psychological make-up' for

<sup>1</sup> *Science and Psychical Phenomena*, London, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Tyrrell Apparatus for Testing Extra-Sensory Perception,' by G. N. M. Tyrrell, in the *Journal of Parapsychology*, Durham, N.C., June, 1938, Vol. II, No. 2, pp. 107-18. See also *Journal, S.P.R.*, January, 1939, pp. 6-8.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal, S.P.R.*, May, 1938, pp. 219-23.

success. It is alleged that we are either too sceptical, too critical, or too academic; or our approach to the subject is 'unfriendly,' or that we have 'unsuitable personalities.' That the psychological factor in E.S.P. experiments is important is obvious; but seriously to suggest—as has been done—that 140 persons failed to show a trace of E.S.P. because the experimenter (Soal) had an unsuitable personality, is nonsense. Soal has purposely handed over his subjects—and experiments—to others, not all of the academic type, but employing his technique, with identical results: not a trace of E.S.P.

As a proof that Mr. Soal's methods on this side of the Atlantic are acceptable to at least one person who has experimented with Rhine I can quote Mrs. Garrett's statement<sup>1</sup> to Mrs. Goldney that Soal's conditions are actually preferable. Mrs. Garrett says: 'The conditions at Duke are tense and emotional in comparison with those with Mr. Soal in London. I, personally, prefer the quieter methods, divorced from constant urging and suggestion, that pertain in London with Mr. Soal.' But in spite of these *better* conditions, Mrs. Garrett failed to get any extra-chance results.

The reason why we fail to get paranormal results in card calling in this country is because, I think, our technique is so much better than the Americans'. Mr. Soal's methods exclude the probability of spurious high scores by making it impossible for normal sensory cues to play any part in the experiments, but I will refer to this question later.

#### CRITICISMS OF E.S.P.

Mr. Soal is not the only person who has criticized the American E.S.P. technique and results. But he is the person most competent to criticize, as, individually, it is probable that he has made more E.S.P. experiments than any other person, and knows much more about the subject. He is also by profession a mathematician, and the proper evaluation of E.S.P. results is largely a question of mathematics and statistical method.

<sup>1</sup> *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. XLV, pp. 86-7.

When *Extra-Sensory Perception* was published in this country in 1935 several scientists and pseudo-scientific journalists accepted the book at its face value and, with uninformed enthusiasm, wrote glowing accounts of the new psychic miracles. The same thing happened in America. But with the realization that the Duke successes could not be repeated in other quarters, notably in London, some of these scientific writers repented of their early enthusiasm and wished they had kept silent.

It would be impossible in this chapter to give a full list of critical articles pointing out the fallacy of the Duke results and criticizing the American technique. The most convincing criticism will come when Soal publishes his important report on his many years' repetition of Rhine's experiments. But in order that the reader can realize the nature of the scientific hostility to the American tests, I will cite a few examples.

At a convention of the American Psychological Association in New York in April, 1938, Dr. Steuart Henderson Britt, of George Washington University, stated that the official E.S.P. cards as sold to the public in America could be read from the backs, either by sight or touch, owing to too heavy printing or other defects. He proceeded to 'read' correctly twenty-four cards out of a pack of twenty-five, with faces unseen. At the same meeting Dr. F. H. Lund stated that he had tested 596 students with E.S.P. cards and had found no paranormality among them. 'L.A.E.' who cites these facts, remarks in a letter to the *Two Worlds*<sup>1</sup> that he had experimented with more than 200 subjects, making more than 500,000 calls, and not one 'can even remotely compare with Dr. Rhine's amazing results.'

Professor Chester E. Kellogg of McGill University wrote a scathing article<sup>2</sup> on the Duke tests and attacks them from a new angle: 'Since Dr. Rhine's reports have led to investigations in many other institutions, it might seem unnecessary

<sup>1</sup> Manchester, April 29, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> 'New Evidence (?) for "Extra-Sensory Perception",' in the *Scientific Monthly*, New York City, October, 1937, pp. 331-41. See also 'A Critical Analysis of Experiments in Extra-Sensory Perception,' by Max Hertzman; and 'Some Implications of Extra-Sensory Perception,' by H. Rogosin, both in *The Psychologists' League Journal*, New York, May-June, 1938.

to prick the bubble, as the truth eventually will out and the craze subside. But meanwhile the public is being misled, the energies of young men and women in their most vital years of professional training are being diverted into a side issue, and funds expended that might instead support research into problems of real importance for human welfare.'

Again, Dr. Eugène Adams, of Colgate University, says:<sup>1</sup> 'I have completed a series of more than 20,000 individual card-guessing tests of the sort that Dr. Rhine has conducted at Duke University. . . . My tests involved thirty different persons and were designed to test clairvoyance, telepathy and the two in combination. I used the same cards that Rhine did. . . . My results were negative. No individual scored beyond chance expectation, nor did the average combined scores exceed normal expectancy.' Professor Kennedy, of Stanford University, reports similar failures, after testing 100 students.<sup>2</sup> Professor Henlein, of Florida State College for Women, carried out 125,000 guesses with only chance results; while James C. Crumbaugh, of Dallas University, made 75,000 tests without success. The chief critic of Rhine's methods in this country, apart from Soal, is Professor R. H. Thouless, of Cambridge University. In a long review<sup>3</sup> of *Extra-Sensory Perception* he remarks: 'It will be gathered that Dr. Rhine's procedure is by no means free from objection, and that his presentation [of results] is open to the much graver objection that the experimental methods are quite inadequately reported.' Dr. Thouless himself has carried out between 6,000 and 7,000 experiments in Glasgow, without success paranormally. To sum up, in no country has official scientific opinion yet accepted Dr. Rhine's results.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *New York Times*, March, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> *Genii*, Pasadena, Calif., Feb., 1938.

<sup>3</sup> *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. XLIII, pp. 24-37.

<sup>4</sup> For criticisms voiced at the convention of the Am. Psychol. Ass., held at Columbus, Ohio, on September 9, 1938, see the 'ESP Symposium at the A.P.A.,' *Journal of Parapsychology*, Durham, N.C., December, 1938. For Professor Thouless's report on his experiments, see 'Report on Glasgow Repetition of Dr. Rhine's Experiments on Extra-Sensory Perception,' *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. XLV, Part 159, July, 1939, pp. 252-6.



## MECHANICAL 'E.S.P.'

Among the critics of the Rhine technique in America are Professor Walter G. Pitkin and Mr. John Mulholland. They contend that the extraordinary runs of 'good' guesses achieved by some of Dr. Rhine's subjects need not necessarily be 'extra-sensory' at all, but due to pure chance. They consider that the number of trials made by Rhine and his friends is not yet great enough to determine whether chance does, or does not, account for the many 'good' runs.

Professor Pitkin and Mr. Mulholland decided to see what pure chance would bring by eliminating the human factor and invited the International Business Machines Corporation, of New York, to assist them in determining whether 'the right answers recorded by the parapsychologists' subjects relate to the total answers in a manner significantly different from similar coincidences of events mechanically produced.' They wished 'to see a full intercorrelation worked out between total guesses, right and wrong, in the Rhine experiments, and a large series made mechanically.'

So the Corporation ran 200,000 numbered cards through their machines. The first 100,000 were white, 'and each card carried digits from one through five. There was an even distribution of those digits. 20,000 cards carried one; 20,000 two, and so on. The white cards were mechanically shuffled and run through a machine which printed the numbers on paper in the order in which they happened to come. The second 100,000 cards were red, and these also had an equal distribution of the first five digits. These, too, were mechanically shuffled, and their numbers were printed on the paper.'

When the experiment was finished, the two printed columns of numbers, one column from the white and one column from the red, were compared. 'Just as with Dr. Rhine's test, there was one chance in five of the pair of digits in any given line being the same—that is, matching. But, with our test, there was no possible chance of mind-reading or clairvoyance as a factor.'

Professor Pitkin and his colleague got some amazing

results. 'For instance, there were as many as thirty-two lines of figures in sequence without one matching pair. Of course, by chance we might expect to get six matching pairs. Again, there would be runs of matching pairs. Professor Pitkin made a most astonishing discovery about these runs. Runs of five matching pairs in sequence fell 25 per cent below theoretical frequency, while runs of six rose to 25 per cent above theoretical frequency. Runs of seven jumped still higher to 59 per cent above chance expectancy, and with runs of eight we went to 780 per cent above theoretical frequency. . . . Another amusing freak deviation from theoretical distribution was that in the first 40,000 pairs there were almost three times as many runs of five as there were in the next 60,000, while with the runs of six it was just the reverse. And neither of these series of runs was to be expected. . . . Totalling the number of "correct guesses" in each thousand of our pure-chance run, we found that 24,000 came within 2 per cent of mathematical expectancy; 30,000 went above and 46,000 went below theoretical chance. The total number of pairs in the entire 100,000 was less than 2 per cent away from what was to be expected. The total, by the way, was under mathematical expectancy.' I am indebted to Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons (the publishers) and to Mr. John Mulholland for permission to cite this most interesting test, which is recorded in full in the latter's *Beware Familiar Spirits* (1938).

#### THE ZENER CARDS

The early E.S.P. cards as used by Rhine and his colleagues at Duke were originally hand-made. As even playing-cards when made commercially are never mechanically perfect, it is obvious that the early home-made ones were unsuitable for critical work.

The first commercially printed E.S.P. cards were, I think, those which I had made for me by Messrs. Plafair of London in November, 1934, for the Soal experiments in the laboratory of the University of London Council for Psychical Investigation, and which are still in use. They have on their faces the

Zener symbols: rectangle, star, plus sign, circle, and wavy lines. The backs are of a uniform 'playing-card' design.

In 1937 the official Duke University Zener cards were put on the American market. They were of two kinds, plain and coloured symbols. The backs of both kinds were similar in design, but different in colour (blue and brown respectively). These cards, complete with instructions, were issued commercially and could be purchased at any news stand at 10 cents per pack. Later, a boxed 'set' of two packs of cards, instruction book,<sup>1</sup> and scoring pad, were offered to the public for \$1.75 complete.

When I received a pack of the commercial E.S.P. 'official' cards I had a shock. I found that through employing an unsuitable design on the reverse of the cards, the stamping die had so cut the pattern (lines and circles) that some of the cards could be recognized *from the backs*. In other words, parts of the pattern varied on some cards. I found that, in five minutes, I could recognize ten of the cards from the backs, just as Dr. Britt demonstrated in New York. Another fault with these cards is that the pattern is not a symmetrical one (i.e. uniform either end) on account of the photograph and lettering in the centre. This lends itself to manipulation on the part of unscrupulous subjects.<sup>2</sup>

The outcry against being able to read the Duke cards from the backs was met by Rhine advising experimenters to cover them over with something when being used—a vital precaution that Soal had been taking with my Plafair cards in every experiment he had ever made. But in the directions sold with the Duke cards, or in the Stuart and Pratt handbook<sup>3</sup> issued with them, not a word of warning is given about screening the backs of the cards when testing for E.S.P. On the contrary, on page 12 of the handbook<sup>3</sup> permission is given to look at the backs: 'Sit where you cannot see the faces of the cards. You may close your eyes or look off into space, *or even look at the backs of the cards.*'<sup>4</sup> It is obvious that

<sup>1</sup> *A Handbook for Testing Extra-Sensory Perception*, by C. E. Stuart and J. G. Pratt, New York, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> The American Zener cards are now being used for conjuring tricks. See 'ESP Miracle,' by Royal V. Heath, *Sphinx*, New York, January, 1938.

<sup>3</sup> *op. cit.*

<sup>4</sup> My italics.

some results obtained with these unscreened cards may be valueless. To my knowledge, neither cards nor handbook have yet been withdrawn. In fact there is a sort of defence of the cards in the *Journal of Parapsychology*,<sup>1</sup> of which Professor McDougall<sup>2</sup> and Dr. Rhine are editors.<sup>3</sup> Under the heading 'ESP Card Imperfections' it is stated that 'since it is much easier to set up simple experimental precautions than to attempt to produce a "perfect" commercial ESP card, it is doubtful whether improvements are at present feasible.'

#### A NATIONAL TEST

When I read the above curious statement, I determined to produce a card which could *not* easily be read from the back except by a hyperæsthete, and the back of which was the same whichever way one held it. The result is illustrated on page 186. I named them the 'Telepatha' cards, and they are made by Messrs. Waddington and marketed by Messrs. George Newnes, Ltd., London. The pattern of the backs was specially designed to *dazzle* the eyes of any subject who attempted to obtain visual clues or *indicia* from the backs of the cards. The symbols on the faces of the cards are X-sign, = sign, triangle, spot, and crescent. The 'Telepatha' card set comprises two packs each of twenty-five cards, with both plain and coloured symbols, an instruction book, and scoring pad.

In an article in *John o'London's Weekly*<sup>4</sup> I suggested that a national test should be held in Great Britain in an effort to ascertain if good telepathic subjects could be found in this country. Mr. Frank Whitaker, the editor of *John o'London's Weekly*, thought well of the idea and in the next issue<sup>5</sup> of his journal, a great national competition was launched. Professor J. C. Flugel,<sup>6</sup> Mr. S. G. Soal,<sup>6</sup> and I were asked to

<sup>1</sup> Vol. II, No. 1, March, 1938, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> Prof. McDougall died on November 28, 1938, aged 67.

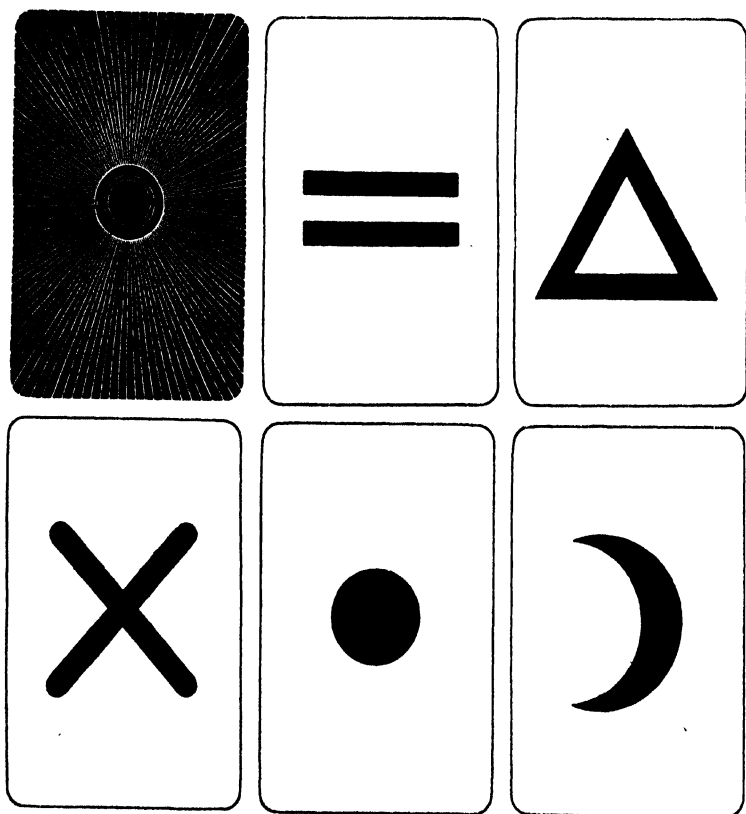
<sup>3</sup> Beginning with the May, 1939, issue, the editorship will be transferred to Gardner Murphy (Columbia University) and Bernard F. Riess (Hunter College), and the *Journal* will be published half-yearly instead of quarterly.

<sup>4</sup> 'Can Telepathy be Proved?' March 10, 1939.

<sup>5</sup> March 17, 1939.

<sup>6</sup> Who also contributed articles on telepathy to *John o'London's* in the issues February 24 and March 3, 1939.

supervise the arrangements, my 'Telepatha' cards being chosen for the tests. The most stringent laboratory conditions were imposed on the competitors. The competition is in full swing as I write these lines.<sup>1</sup>



PRICE'S 'TELEPATHA' CARDS, WITH DAZZLE BACKS

To the uninitiated, testing subjects for E.S.P. may sound a simple job; in reality it is a most difficult and complicated one. To be an efficient experimenter, one should be a con-

<sup>1</sup> The result was negative. About four hundred persons entered the competition and those results sent in 'lend little or no support to Dr. Rhine's theories.' (For details, see *John o' London's Weekly*, May 12, 1939.)

jurer, psychologist, and mathematician rolled into one. The pitfalls are many.

To begin with, there may be collusion between experimenter and subject. Or the latter may be able to exchange his own prepared pack ('stacked' cards) for those of the person testing, or see the reflection of card faces in mirror, pictures, or shiny table-top. Codes, visual or aural, might be used between the subject and any person in the room able to see either backs or faces of the cards. Marked, dirty, stained, cracked, or used cards would provide the subject with clues, if they were not screened. Bad shuffling of cards on the part of the tester would increase the 'good' guesses if the subject—consciously or unconsciously—remembered their order. In addition, there is always the possibility of experimental error, faulty recording, mal-observation, faked records, or sheer lying on the part of the experimenter or his assistants.

Mr. S. G. Soal, in an illuminating address to the Ghost Club<sup>1</sup> on March 15, 1938, related many of the snags in E.S.P. work. He pointed out that even in the most perfect commercial cards there is always some small speck or irregularity, made either mechanically or in printing, visible to good normal eyesight. And many more markings, etc., would be visible to a person like Marion, whose feats due to hyper-æsthesia of the various senses (especially that of touch) have to be seen to be believed.<sup>2</sup> A person has only to see or recognize *one* card in a pack of twenty-five to send up his average from a chance score of five to an extra-chance score of six. Marion was able to pick out in the light a card that he had never seen, but had touched only once *in the dark*.

Another source of error is the careless handling of a pack of cards so that the subject sees the bottom one. There again his average would rise to six. It is also possible for a perfectly honest experimenter, by unconscious whispering, slight bodily movements, change in breathing rate, or other *indicia*, unconsciously to convey to the equally honest subject

<sup>1</sup> A social 'psychic' club, founded in 1862, revived in 1881 and again in 1938 (by Harry Price).

<sup>2</sup> See: 'Preliminary Studies of a Vaudeville Telepathist,' by S. G. Soal, *Bulletin* IV, Univ. of London Council for Psychical Investigation, London, 1937.

when a card is called correctly. The subject might then be aware, subconsciously, when five of one symbol (the full set) had been called, and would refrain—also subconsciously—from calling that symbol again. This would send up his average score above chance. That is why a screen between experimenter and subject is necessary. Preferential mental associations (and ‘pattern habits’) must also be taken into account. All these ‘snags’ and many others are detailed in Mr. Soal’s paper,<sup>1</sup> which should be read by those wishing to conduct experiments in E.S.P.

Before I conclude this story of E.S.P. and its recent dramatic developments, I must reiterate that the successes of Dr. Rhine and his colleagues at Duke University have not yet been accepted by official science in any country. Dr. Rhine himself has published two highly provocative works in which he claims to have demonstrated scientifically that clairvoyance and telepathy are faculties possessed by many people in America. All that is now needed to complete the trilogy is a volume telling us how we can reproduce the Duke ‘miracles’ on this side of the Atlantic.

### CONJURING AND COLLUSION

I have said little in this chapter about the possibilities of conjuring and collusion in obtaining high E.S.P. scores. Many methods will suggest themselves to the reader. But one system, not so well known, is published by Mr. Theo Annemann in an article ‘Was Professor J. B. Rhine Hoodwinked?’<sup>2</sup> This is called the ‘mental count’ and has been used in various conjuring tricks for many years.

In some E.S.P. telepathic experiments, the ‘percipient’ (receiver) is in one room, and the ‘agent’ (sender) is in another. By means of a telegraph key and sounder, the agent signals to the percipient when he is thinking of a symbol.

Collusion could be accomplished in the following way, even when the shuffling of the cards and the conditions of the test were under the control of the investigators:

<sup>1</sup> *Snags in E.S.P.*, Univ. of London Library (‘Harry Price Library’), 1938.

<sup>2</sup> See *The Jinx*, Waverly, New York, August, 1938, pp. 329, 333.

Previous to the experiment, both sender and receiver practise counting mentally and in unison by means of a metronome or loud-ticking clock. With very little practice, their mental counts absolutely synchronize. The counting is always from one to five.

By pre-arrangement between sender and receiver, each symbol is allotted a certain number: e.g. a circle would be one, a cross two, a star three, and so on. The first card turned up by the agent is a five to one chance against the symbol being guessed correctly by the percipient. But immediately after the agent presses the telegraph key for the first time, *both agent and percipient begin counting mentally 1-2-3-4-5-1-2-3-4-5-1-2-3-* etc. If the agent's next card is, say, a star (three), he stops mentally counting at this number and taps the telegraph key. The percipient also stops counting mentally when he hears the sounder, and he, like the agent, has also arrived at three; and of course, as three is a star he calls 'star'—which is correct. Then they start counting again with the next card. With a little practice, twenty-four out of the twenty-five newly shuffled cards could be called correctly. It is obvious that the principle of the 'mental count' could be applied to other phases of E.S.P. technique.



## CHAPTER XI

### THE MECHANICS OF SPIRITUALISM

THE history of spiritualism is a history of fraud. From the days of Elizabeth Parsons and the Fox girls down to the latest newspaper 'exposure,' it is the same distressing story. It will be noticed that the various prosecutions, 'confessions,' and dark-séance grabbings invariably concern physical mediums—seldom mental ones. If a mental medium (e.g. a *clairvoyante*) tells you that she 'sees' the spirit of your grandmother attired in a green dress with red spots, you cannot contradict her. But if this same medium professes to be able to materialize your grandmother, you can so arrange conditions that fraud would be impossible. Although it is very difficult to 'expose' a mental medium, one can sometimes check her séance utterances, and prove if veridical or not; or if performing publicly, it can be ascertained if confederates are used.

Of course, some mediums are alternately fraudulent and genuine, and these people are difficult to test. Eusapia Palladino is the classic example. She warned observers that she would cheat if permitted to do so, and cheat she did. Her tricks were usually childish: long hairs attached to small objects in order to produce 'telekinetic movements'; the gradual substitution of one hand for two when being controlled by sitters; the production of 'phenomena' with a foot which had been surreptitiously removed from its shoe, and so on. Some of her tricks were so subtle that at the Cambridge tests in 1895 J. N. Maskelyne was called in to detect them. But with all her deceptions, Eusapia was often genuine and her tricks were of some psychological interest.

Even Florrie Cook, the beloved medium of Sir William Crookes, was finally caught pirouetting round the room in a white garment by Mr. W. Volckman, who, at a séance on December 9, 1873, seized the spirit 'Katie King' and found

it was Florrie.<sup>1</sup> She was again exposed on January 9, 1880, by Sir George Sitwell, who also seized the 'spirit,' and found Florrie masquerading in her underclothes. More recently, in 1921, Miss Ada M. Bessinet, the American voice and physical medium, was investigated in London. Her spurious phenomena were alleged to have been produced 'subconsciously.'<sup>2</sup> Her 'spirit lights,' direct voice, and the 'para-normal' lashing of her body to the séance chair by 'spirits,' did not impress Professor J. H. Hyslop, who tested her in 1909 and 1910.<sup>3</sup> He concluded that the medium's performance was fraudulent, to the extent that it was done in a state of dissociation or hysteria, for which she was not consciously responsible. One has to be a very experienced investigator to be able to discriminate between true and false manifestations. Some people can never tell the difference and that is why the 'Margery' thumb-print controversy<sup>4</sup> is still with us. In the same way, many people believe that the freeing of Rudi Schneider's arm<sup>5</sup> was an unconscious 'fraud,' and not a deliberate act.

This question of 'subconscious fraud' is as perplexing as it is disturbing. Many observers declare that they do not know what is, or is not, psychic fraud. A medium may be normally honest, but subliminally fraudulent, and it is sometimes difficult to be certain that the psychic is cheating: the subconscious 'fraud' may be so like the conscious variety that we may be unable to tell the difference, though the fact remains that at least 99 per cent of all alleged psychic happenings are fraudulent. Of course, if there is evidence of previous preparation for fraud, the case is simplified. And in dealing with 'obvious charlatans,' one cannot always be certain. When Mesmer was hounded from country to country as an impostor and adventurer, his critics little realized that his 'animal magnetism' would be developed by medical science into the curative hypnotism of to-day. And Dr. Albert Abrams, whose 'magic box' was hailed as the 'greatest medical hoax in history' was acclaimed by high

<sup>1</sup> See *The Medium and Daybreak*, January 23, 1874.

<sup>2</sup> See *Psychic Science*, London, Vol. I, Part 1, 1922.

<sup>3</sup> *Proc.*, Am. S.P.R., Vol. V, New York, 1911.

<sup>4</sup> See page 114, *ante*.

<sup>5</sup> See page 107, *ante*.

British medical authorities as the discoverer of a real phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> The 'fraud' of to-day can easily be the orthodox science of to-morrow.

During the Meurig Morris action against the *Daily Mail*, Sir Oliver Lodge in the witness-box said, according to *The Times* report:<sup>2</sup> 'I hear about fraudulent mediums, but I have not come across them.' Sir Oliver must have forgotten his séance in 1931 with Mrs. Duncan, who was thoroughly exposed that same year.

### PHOTOGRAPHING THE SPIRITS

Sir Oliver was also unfortunate with his sittings with William Hope (1863-1933), the fraudulent spirit photographer. I caught this man surreptitiously changing my sensitized plates in 1922,<sup>3</sup> and he was later again thoroughly exposed<sup>4</sup> by Mr. Fred Barlow. After my exposure of Hope, Sir Oliver wrote me:<sup>5</sup> 'I don't see how your proofs of Hope's duplicity could be more complete.' And yet we find, in J. Arthur Hill's *Letters from Sir Oliver Lodge*,<sup>6</sup> a reference to Hope in a letter to Hill, dated July 29, 1929, nearly seven years after he wrote to me. Sir Oliver says: 'The probability to my mind is strongly in favour of simplicity and honesty, now that he has been going on so long.' Which is a curious argument.

The annals of psychical research are full of exposures of 'spirit' photographers. The first, William H. Mumler, of Boston (Mass.), was prosecuted in 1868.<sup>7</sup> He was caught out because it was discovered that his photographs of 'spirits' were, in fact, those of persons who were alive. One such 'spirit' testified against him in court. Édouard Buguet, a French imitator, was imprisoned in Paris in 1876<sup>8</sup> for spirit

<sup>1</sup> See *A Preliminary Communication Concerning the 'Electronic Reactions' of Abrams*, by Sir Thomas Horder, London, 1925.

<sup>2</sup> April 13, 1932.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal*, S.P.R., May, 1922.

<sup>4</sup> *Proc.*, S.P.R., Part 129, 1933; and *Journal*, S.P.R., July, 1933.

<sup>5</sup> April 18, 1922.

<sup>6</sup> London, 1932, p. 231.

<sup>7</sup> *The Mumler 'Spirit' Photograph Case*, New York, 1869.

<sup>8</sup> *Revue Spirite*, Paris, Nos. 1-12.

photograph frauds. He made a full confession. He began using living models for his 'extras.' When that became too dangerous, he constructed a lay figure which he could dress up to suit the 'spirit' which he knew his client so longed to see. Flammarion also detected Buguet in fraud.

Richard Boursnell (1832-1909), an English photographic medium, was caught cheating by Osborne Moore.<sup>1</sup> He used the old double exposure and 'substituting the plate' method. George H. Moss, a chauffeur, became a 'spirit photographer,' and once photographed the 'spirit' of my 'mother.' Unfortunately for Moss, Hope had also just recently photographed my 'mother,' too, and there was not the slightest resemblance between the two ladies. Moss was finally caught by Fred Barlow, who discovered that Moss's plates were filed at one end so that, in the dark, he could feel which way up the 'extras' were to be placed. Inverted spirit heads would, of course, look most inartistic in a photograph! Moss finally signed a full confession<sup>2</sup> that his 'spirits,' copied from old illustrated journals and the 'family album,' were produced by normal means.

Among the most picturesque (see Plate I) of photographic mediums is Mrs. Ada Emma Deane, a former charwoman, whose 'spirit heads,' photographed floating round the Cenotaph on Armistice Day, were declared by the *Daily Sketch*<sup>3</sup> to be portraits of living footballers, whose pictures had appeared in that paper. After this exposure, no more was heard of the Cenotaph spirits. The London 'Magic Circle' had previously exposed her in 1922.<sup>4</sup> Contemporary with Mrs. Deane are two Scotch youths, Craig and George Falconer. One of their 'spirit heads' was found to be identical with Albert Moore's famous study 'Blossoms' in the Tate Gallery. Later, they went on a professional tour to South Africa, were caught by the police (1931), were convicted for producing fraudulent spirit photographs, and each was fined £150 and costs. They appealed and lost, the judge remarking that the brothers 'were encouraged in their

<sup>1</sup> *Glimpses of the Next State*, London, 1911.

<sup>2</sup> *Psychic Science*, Vol. IV, pp. 229-33, London, 1925.

<sup>3</sup> *Daily Sketch*, London, November 13-22, 1924.

<sup>4</sup> *Report of the Occult Committee*, London, May, 1922.

fraud by the credulous fools who supported them.' Apparently they are still finding 'clients' as I noticed their advertisement in *The Greater World* as recently as March 26, 1938. It stated that they have 'produced astounding evidence of survival to all investigators,' excepting, of course, the Johannesburg police.<sup>1</sup> This was almost the end of the photographic mediums. But in 1932 John Myers appeared, and what happened to him can be read in the contemporary psychic and lay Press.<sup>2</sup> The principal American spirit photographer, William M. Keeler, was exposed<sup>3</sup> by the late Dr. Walter F. Prince.<sup>4</sup> I will not detail the methods used, as there is a monotony in the *modus operandi* of producing these 'extras': double exposure; 'switching' the plates or dark slides (or even the camera); the use of lay figures, etc. But there would be no spirit photographs if there were no foolish sitters to pay their guineas for them.

#### 'MATERIALIZING' METHODS

Reports on 'materializing' mediums during the last fifty years in all parts of the world are riddled with exposures of fraud. I will mention a few of those cases which are educational as well as entertaining. The classic example is that of Charles Eldred, who travelled from séance to séance, taking with him his 'highly magnetized' arm-chair in which the various spirit entities materialized. It seems incredible that a medium under test should be allowed to use his own properties, and even his spiritualist dupes at last became suspicious of the number and variety of 'phantoms' which Eldred produced. At a séance in London in 1906 both he and his chair were seized by Dr. Abraham Wallace. It was

<sup>1</sup> For full reports of the trial and conviction of the Falconer brothers, see the complete files of the South African journals in the Univ. of London Library ('Harry Price Library'). See also *Light*, October 2, 1931.

<sup>2</sup> *Sunday Dispatch*, October 16, 23, 30, 1932. 'A Charge of Fraud: Accusations against Mr. John Myers,' by J. B. McIndoe, in the *Two Worlds*, September 6, 1935; also 'Myers Exposed Again?' by Roy Brandon, in the *Two Worlds*, October 11, 1935.

<sup>3</sup> 'Supplementary Report on the Keeler-Lee Photographs,' *Proc.*, Am. S.P.R., Vol. XIII, New York, 1919, pp. 529-87.

<sup>4</sup> For the result of the *Daily Mail* inquiry into spirit photography, see *The Times*, June 22, 1909.



Charles Eldred's mechanical chair (with removable back), mask, spirit drapery, wigs, and other 'properties,' 1906.



Mrs. J. B. Mellon with her spirit guide 'Geordie', photographed at séance, 1894.

discovered that the back of the chair was really a box, with lock and key. In the box were found a collapsible dummy, yards of cheese cloth and scent (for 'spirit perfumes'), reaching rods, a musical box (for 'spirit music'), wigs and beards, etc. (See Plate V.)<sup>1</sup>

Amongst other exposures must be mentioned that of Harry Bastian whose 'materializations' in Vienna on February 11, 1884, were proved to be fraudulent.<sup>2</sup> Frederick Fisher Craddock was caught at Manchester in 1879. His spirit guide 'Rosetta' was found to be Craddock masquerading in his shirt. Colonel Mark Mayhew also records<sup>3</sup> how another spirit, 'Abdullah,' was seized and found to be the medium.<sup>4</sup> Madame d'Espérance was seized in Newcastle in 1880, masquerading in her underclothes as her spirit control 'Yolande.' A similar incident occurred at Helsingfors in 1893. Mrs. J. B. Mellon (Annie Fairlamb) was exposed in Sydney by Thomas Shekleton Henry,<sup>5</sup> a young architect. Her 'guides,' 'Cissie' and 'Geordie,' were impersonated by the masked medium kneeling or standing. (See Plate VI.) 'Dr.' Monck, an ex-Baptist minister, was sentenced to three months' imprisonment in 1876 for fake materializations at Huddersfield. He had a trunk full of 'properties.' Miss C. E. Wood was caught cheating at Peterborough in 1882. She was found on her knees, semi-nude, covered with muslin and impersonating an Indian spirit 'control' named 'Pocka.' In the same way Serjeant Cox exposed Miss Mary Showers in 1894. The spirit 'Florence' had her head-dress knocked off in the scrimmage—thus revealing the medium. Charles Williams (who 'worked' with Frank Herne, another medium) was caught out at Paris in 1874 and again at Amsterdam in 1879. When seized, the usual beards, cheese cloth, phosphorized oil, etc., were found on him. Einer Nielsen, the Danish medium, was accused of fraud at Oslo in 1922,<sup>6</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> See 'Exposure of Mr. Eldred,' *Journal*, S.P.R., Vol. XII, p. 242-52.

<sup>2</sup> *Einblicke in den Spiritismus*, by Erzherzog Johann [Linz], 1884.

<sup>3</sup> *Light*, March 24 and 31, 1906.

<sup>4</sup> See 'Exposures of Mr. Craddock,' *Journal*, S.P.R., Vol. XII, pp. 266-8, 274-7. See *Daily Express* for May 16, 17, and June 21, 1906, for conviction of Craddock who was fined £10 at Edgware Police Court for fraudulent mediumship.

<sup>5</sup> *Spookland*, by T. Shekleton Henry, Sydney [1894].

<sup>6</sup> See *Norsk Tidsskrift for Psykisk Forskning*, Oslo, for 1922, Parts 2 and 3.



again in 1932.<sup>1</sup> I sat with Nielsen in Copenhagen, with unsatisfactory results. William Eglinton, materializing medium, was exposed in London by Archdeacon Colley and again in Munich. Dr. Hodgson also accused him of conspiring with H. P. Blavatsky in producing Theosophical 'miracles.'<sup>2</sup>

#### THE REGURGITATION THEORY

One of the most amazing exposures of 'materializing' methods was that of Mrs. Helen Duncan. In 1931 she sat at the National Laboratory of Psychical Research. She gave us five séances, which cost us £50. Among the observers were Mrs. A. Peel Goldney, Professor J. C. Flugel, Professor W. McDougall, Dr. William Brown, Professor D. F. Fraser-Harris, etc. Although this woman was medically examined and enclosed in our own one-piece garment, she was able to secrete yards of cheese cloth with which she impersonated 'Albert,' 'Peggy,' and other 'spirits.' (See Plate I.) I took a large number of photographs of the cheese-cloth phantoms and all show the warp and weft of the material, selvedge, creases and even dirt marks. Other things which appeared in the photographs were rubber gloves, safety-pins, and cut-out heads from magazine covers. The question arose 'How did she secrete these "properties"?' The only part of her anatomy which the doctors could not explore was her stomach, and we came to the conclusion—which I am certain is the correct one—that she possesses an *esophageal diverticulum* or secondary stomach, into which she swallowed the cheese cloth, etc., to be regurgitated at leisure. Such cases are well known.<sup>3</sup> We published a long illustrated report<sup>4</sup> on this woman. After it was issued, her former maid, Miss Mary McGinlay, came to us and, before a Commissioner for Oaths, supported our theory concerning regurgitation.<sup>5</sup> Mrs. Duncan was later

<sup>1</sup> See Copenhagen Press for April, 1932.

<sup>2</sup> *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. III, 1885, p. 254.

<sup>3</sup> See 'Diagnosis and Surgical Treatment of Esophageal Diverticula. Report of Eight Cases,' by Charles H. Mayo, in *Annals of Surgery*, June, 1910.

<sup>4</sup> 'Regurgitation and the Duncan Mediumship,' by Harry Price. *Bulletin I*, Nat. Lab. Psychical Research, London, 1931.

<sup>5</sup> Her 'Declaration' was published as an *Appendix* to the Duncan Report.

(May 11, 1933) convicted<sup>1</sup> at Edinburgh for fraudulent mediumship (her undervest was the 'spirit') and fined £10 or a month's imprisonment. After the conviction the Spiritualists' National Union gave her a vote of confidence (July 1, 1933) and her 'diploma' was renewed.<sup>2</sup> It may seem strange that a stomach should be put to such uses, but 'ectoplasm' (i.e. cotton wool, cheese cloth, etc.) and small 'apports' have been found secreted in rectum, vagina, and prepuce of various mediums.

Another recent conviction of a materializing medium was the case of Clive Holmes, who was charged at Greenwich Police Court on June 16, 1937, with obtaining four shillings (the charge made for a séance) by false pretences. A Mrs. V. B. Evens and her son attended one of Holmes's séances at which the spirit 'White Moose' appeared. Mr. Evens flashed his torch on the 'spirit,' which was alleged to be none other than Holmes himself, dressed in white muslin. After several adjournments the magistrate, Mr. L. R. Dunne (July 21, 1937), sentenced Holmes to four months in the second division. The medium appealed, and lost.<sup>3</sup> The latest 'materializing' exposure is that of Mrs. Elizabeth Grover, who, when the light was switched on, was 'discovered in her underclothes draped with wet butter muslin, with a calico bandage round her head.'<sup>4</sup> She signed a confession to the effect that she 'fraudulently produced the materialized form of "Albert Stewart" and others.'<sup>5</sup> She was making 'something like £20 per week.'<sup>6</sup>

America has produced many fakers and amongst the most amusing exposures must be mentioned that of Mr. and Mrs. Thompson, who 'materialized' the 'mother' of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Sir Arthur was present and, according to the article,<sup>7</sup> embraced his 'mother.' Leonard J. Hartman, the pastor of a spiritualist church, wrote the report. A few days after the Doyle séance, the Thompsons were seized at another

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, May 12, 1933, and Scots papers of same date.

<sup>2</sup> *Two Worlds*, Manchester, July 14, 1933.

<sup>3</sup> See *The Times* and *Daily Mail* for June 17 and July 22, 1937.

<sup>4</sup> *Two Worlds*, August 12, 1938.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, August 12, 1938.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, August 26, 1938, p. 536.

<sup>7</sup> 'How the Mediums "Brought Back" Sir Conan Doyle's Dead Mother,' *New York Sunday American*, September 3, 1922.

sitting by two police officers. The usual masks, wigs, chiffon, musical box and scent-spray were found on them. They were convicted and fined.

#### THE 'SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN' INQUIRY

In 1922 the *Scientific American* launched an inquiry into psychic matters, based largely on my exposure of Hope. Among those tested was George Valiantine, well-known voice and physical medium, who entered for the *Scientific American* prize of \$2,500, to be awarded to any medium producing a physical phenomenon under test conditions. Valiantine was charged with fraud. At the final sitting, in complete darkness, on May 26, 1923, special apparatus was installed. This was an electrical circuit which included the chair on which the medium sat. When the medium rose from his seat, a light went out in an adjoining room. Dictaphone notes were taken of all that occurred. It was found that Valiantine left his chair fifteen times (when he should have been in it), sometimes for as long as eighteen seconds, and that these periods corresponded with those when the sitters were touched by the 'spirits.'<sup>1</sup> Other mediums who were tested included the Rev. Josie K. Stewart, a woman who produced 'supernormal' writing on cards; Mrs. Thompson, materializing medium; and Nino Pecoraro.<sup>2</sup> They were all exposed. The reader has already learnt how 'Margery' fared in this investigation.

Valiantine was in London in 1925 and I had one séance with him. He was then producing voice phenomena. At this particular séance, held at the house of Mr. Dennis Bradley, the spirit of Luigi Arditi (the composer) was alleged to manifest. I took down all that 'Arditi' said and afterwards discovered that every sentence was identical with those I found in Bradshaw's *Complete Anglo-Italian Phrase-*

<sup>1</sup> See issues of the *Scientific American*, New York, from October, 1922 to January, 1923; and 'Untold Facts Behind *Scientific American's* Psychic Probe!' by Austin C. Lescarboursa in *True Mystic Science*, Minneapolis, November, 1928. See also *Daily Express*, London, May 28, 1923 (article, 'Spirits with a Punch').

<sup>2</sup> See *The Medium who Admits he is a Fake*, by Jack Alexander, St. Louis, U.S.A., 1931.

*Book* and Jaschke's *English-Italian Dictionary*. Not a comma had been altered.<sup>1</sup> Dennis Bradley had many sittings with Valiantine, but in 1931, in some experiments for finger-print impressions (*à la* Margery) Bradley found that the thumb-print of the spirit 'Conan Doyle' coincided with Valiantine's right big toe, and a print from the spirit thumb of Lord Dewar exactly matched that of the medium's left big toe. An indelible dye had been painted on the substance to be impressed, and this same dye was found on the medium's feet and elbow.<sup>2</sup>

Another voice medium whom I detected was Frederick Tansley Munnings, an ex-burglar. I had invented a piece of testing apparatus which I called the Voice Control Recorder. Munnings tried hard to beat the machine, but failed. We heard the voices of 'Julius Cæsar,' 'Dan Leno,' 'Crippen' and 'Henry VIII,' but the machine proved that it was Munnings speaking. He finally sold his 'confessions' to a Sunday paper.<sup>3</sup>

Voice mediums under test have usually done badly. Mrs. Susannah Harris, an American, was investigated in Oslo in 1920, when twenty-five sittings were held. The final report was, to put it mildly, very uncomplimentary.<sup>4</sup> This account of unsatisfactory voice mediums could be extended indefinitely. Another unsatisfactory séance was that held at 61, North Gate Mansions, Regent's Park, on May 27, 1938, with Mr. Colin Evans. This medium claims that, in complete darkness, he is 'levitated.' Mrs. A. Peel Goldney, Mrs. Henry Richards and others were convinced that at this particular test no levitation took place and the cheque paid to the medium was returned to the sitters.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The detailed analysis of this case can be found in Price's *Leaves From a Psychist's Case-Book*, pp. 307-15.

<sup>2</sup> Bradley tells the whole story in . . . *And After* (London, 1931). See also 'Tricks of a Famous Medium Exposed: Finger-Prints of the Dead Faked,' in the *Daily Express*, September 21, 1931. The complete history of Valiantine's activities has been summed up (1932) by Mrs. W. H. Salter: 'The History of George Valiantine,' *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. XL, pp. 389-410.

<sup>3</sup> 'My Confessions: How I Produced "Spirit Voices",' in the *People*, February 5 to May 13, 1928. See also 'The Case of Mr. Moss and Mr. Munnings', *Journal*, S.P.R., Vol. XXIII, pp. 71-5.

<sup>4</sup> See *Light*, May 1, 1920.

<sup>5</sup> A photograph of an alleged psychic levitation of this medium was published in the *Daily Mirror*, June 13, 1938. See also *Photography* for January, 1939. How photographs can be obtained of a man assumed to be levitating, but in reality *jumping*, is graphically recorded (with illustrations) in *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. XLV, Part 158, pp. 196-8.

## SLATE-WRITING 'MIRACLES'

For some reason I have been unable to fathom, British slate-writing mediums are, and have been, almost non-existent. This particular 'spirit' technique is peculiarly American, and every exponent who consented to be tested scientifically has come to grief.

The great spirit slate-writer was 'Dr.' Henry Slade, who visited London in 1876 and impressed a number of spiritualists and others. Professor Ray Lankester secured a sitting with him, saw how the trick was done, and published his exposure in *The Times*.<sup>1</sup> He then charged Slade with having swindled him. (See Plate VII.) The case was heard at Bow Street Police Court on October 1, 1876, and the medium was sentenced to three months' hard labour. Owing to some legal flaw in the indictment, the sentence was quashed and before Ray Lankester could issue a fresh summons, Slade fled to the Continent.<sup>2</sup> He was often exposed,<sup>3</sup> and his tricks have been published in full by John W. Truesdell.<sup>4</sup> These tricks include the substitution of slates already written on for blank ones examined by the sitter; the writing on one side of a slate held flat to the underside of a table by the two thumbs of the medium (the remaining eight fingers being above the table), who has cemented a tiny piece of slate-pencil or chalk to the nail of one thumb, with which he can easily write the 'spirit message'; the surreptitious addition, to a pile of examined slates, of an unexamined one bearing a 'message,' and so on. Another notorious slate-writing medium was P. L. O. A. Keeler, who was exposed by Dr. W. F. Prince in a brilliant monograph.<sup>5</sup> Another means of producing spontaneous writing on slates is by means of chemicals. When first written, the words are quite invisible, and the slate can be freely examined. In a few minutes the writing appears and the sitter is duly impressed. Finally,

<sup>1</sup> September 16, 1876.

<sup>2</sup> Where he impressed J. C. F. Zöllner, the astronomer. See his *Transcendental Physics*, London, 1880.

<sup>3</sup> See *Boston Herald*, February 2, 1886.

<sup>4</sup> *The Bottom Facts Concerning the Science of Spiritualism*, New York, 1883.

<sup>5</sup> *Proc., Am. S.P.R.*, New York, Vol. XV, pp. 315-592.

there are mechanical slates. I have a pair, which I bought for £8 from an American medium, which are marvels of mechanism. The slates can be handled by the victim, or even left in his possession: he would never discover the secret. Yet, at will, the four blank sides can be filled with any 'spirit' writing desired, in various colours, *even when being held by the sitter*. The secret is that the centres of the slates are in duplicate. Pressure on a certain spot of the frame allows one flap to fall, instantly and silently, into the frame of the other slate, where it is automatically locked. Both inside surfaces of the slates are then covered with writing. The slates can then be turned over and the operation repeated, making four sides of writing. Any reader sufficiently interested in slate-writing tricks should read the exhaustive work<sup>1</sup> by 'Chung Ling Soo' (i.e. William Ellsworth Robinson).

## APPORTS AND PSYCHIC LIGHTS

Very few serious investigators of to-day accept 'apports' (i.e. the spontaneous appearance at a séance of solid objects) but there have been some famous apport mediums. The Australian, Charles Bailey, specialized in such things as live animals, scarabs, and exotic antiques. He was often exposed. At Grenoble on February 20, 1910, two live birds 'materialized' at a séance. But the birds were recognized by the local dealer who supplied them to the medium. There was another scandal in Sydney in 1914.<sup>2</sup> I have already mentioned in Chapter I the 'apports' of Lajos Pap,<sup>3</sup> Anna Rothe, Heinrich Melzer, and Hilda Lewis.<sup>4</sup> All these mediums were exposed.

Another woman medium who fared badly was Mrs. Baylis. She was tested by Dennis Bradley, who published a scathing report<sup>5</sup> concerning her. A famous physical medium, Stanislaw P., was exposed in Paris by Dr. Eugène Osty,

<sup>1</sup> *Spirit Slate Writing and Kindred Phenomena*, New York and London, 1899.

<sup>2</sup> For accounts of Bailey's work in England, see *Journal*, S.P.R., Vol. XII pp. 77-88, 109-18; and Vol. XV, pp. 194-208.

<sup>3</sup> See page 30; see also 'I Expose the Shams of Spiritualism,' by Nandor Fodor, in the *Leader*, London, October 15, 1938, pp. 28-30.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>5</sup> 'Another Unsatisfactory Séance,' *Light*, November 26, 1927.

who, by means of an automatic camera, photographed her *in flagrante delicto*.<sup>1</sup> The picture shows her making a 'telekinetic' movement with her hand.

Another physical medium, Clemens Kraus (*pseud.*: 'Karl Weber') was exposed in Vienna by Professor Hans Thirring in November, 1924. In his report<sup>2</sup> Kraus's tricks are described and illustrated. Kraus afterwards wrote his 'confessions,'<sup>3</sup> the MS. and copyright of which were purchased by me. One of Kraus's tricks pictured by Professor Thirring shows the medium, in the dark, lifting a heavy table completely off the floor *by means of his head*. His hands and feet were fully controlled. Still another materializing medium, Harold Evans (a Britisher) was exposed by a panel formed by the *Sunday Chronicle*. Professor Julian Huxley, Professor A. M. Low, Dr. Harold Dearden, Miss Estelle Stead and others were the judges. Evans was found to be masquerading in a white nightshirt, which was seized.<sup>4</sup>

Baron von Schrenck-Notzing exposed a number of physical mediums including Oskar Schlag, Kraus, and Ladislaus Laszlo,<sup>5</sup> the latter a Hungarian. At the time of his death the Baron had just completed a MS. *Gefalschte Wunder: Kraus-Laszlo-Schlag*, a work dealing with the tricks of the above mediums. Lucia Sordi, an Italian medium, claimed to be able to 'dematerialize' herself from the inside of a locked cage. She was tested by Schrenck, who was impressed with the way in which she escaped from her prison until he found that a wooden block, the exact size of her head, could be squeezed between the bars of the cage.<sup>6</sup> These 'matter through matter' miracles are part of the stock-in-trade of many physical mediums. When Slade was in Leipzig he convinced Zöllner that he was able to pass a sealed loop of cord through a solid wooden ring.<sup>7</sup> This 'proof' of Zöllner's theory of the 'fourth dimension' caused

<sup>1</sup> See *Revue Métapsychique*, Paris, for November-December, 1930.

<sup>2</sup> 'Psychical Research in Vienna,' *Journal*, Am. S.P.R., December 1925, pp. 690-707.

<sup>3</sup> Abstract was published in the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, December 25, 1932.

<sup>4</sup> See 'Amazing Exposure of a Famous Medium,' *Sunday Chronicle*, October 31, 1926.

<sup>5</sup> See 'Der Betrug des Mediums Ladislaus Laszlo,' *Psychische Studien*, Leipzig, March, 1924, pp. 129-60.

<sup>6</sup> *Luce e Ombra*, Rome, November, 1910.

<sup>7</sup> *Transcendental Physics*.

much controversy.<sup>1</sup> The trick is now well known and is worked as follows: the knot is a faked one in which is hidden a tiny threaded brass tapered socket. To one end of the cord is glued a tiny tapered brass screw. This end can be screwed into the knot at will, and as it buries itself in the knot, the deception is absolutely undetectable. I have a specimen which I have even loaned to people who have never found the secret. Yet, with hands behind my back, I was able to remove the ring from the cord—or put it on—in a few seconds. In the same way, Cecil Husk claimed, by psychic means, to pass on to his arm a solid forged iron ring apparently much too small to encircle his hand. The S.P.R. demonstrated that by using a local anæsthetic on his hand the feat could be performed without recourse to the spirits.<sup>2</sup> Jean Guzik, whom I exposed<sup>3</sup> in Warsaw in 1923, also declared that he could cause solid objects to pass spontaneously into locked boxes, though he never had the temerity to show me this particular wonder. However, he did show me (in the dark) his ‘fiery Pithecanthropus’—his own hand in a stocking dabbed with two phosphorus ‘eyes.’

#### MEDIUM OF THE RUE CHRISTINE

In the summer of 1936 I happened to break my journey at Ostend on the way home from Germany. I was strolling down the Rue Christine one hot evening when I noticed outside a shop a board which informed me, in English, French and Flemish, that a medium was ‘operating’ there nightly. Admission, 25 francs. I looked at my watch and found the show was due to begin in twenty minutes, at eight o’clock precisely. I clambered up the short flight of wooden stairs leading to the first-floor room over the shop, where the séance was due to be held. A warm welcome from a blowsy-looking female greeted each sitter, who was asked for his fee, even before he seated himself.

<sup>1</sup> See *Gemeinfassliche, Leicht Controlirbare Lösung der Aufgabe: ‘In ein ringförmig geschlossenes Band einen Knoten zu machen’ . . .* by Oscar Simony, Wien, 1881.

<sup>2</sup> See *Proc., S.P.R.*, Vol. III, 1885, pp. 460-3.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Some Impressions of Jean Guzik and his Phenomena,’ by Harry Price, *Light*, September 29, 1923.



The séance room was a small one and the medium—of the typical Belgian mechanic class—was seated with his back to the only window, over which, just before the séance began, curtains were drawn, excluding all light. The sitters sat round him in a semicircle. In front of the medium was a table supporting a tambourine, a toy trumpet, and a small accordion. The sitters—most of them of the usual rather unintelligent sort who frequent séances—were asked to search the medium and lash him to his chair. Two men volunteered. They turned out the man's pockets very thoroughly, and made a good job of roping the Belgian. Then the light was switched off and we were left in complete darkness.

The séance had hardly begun when the female I have mentioned complained of the heat in the room, and leaving her place in the circle, went over in the dark to the window, which she opened a few inches at the bottom, again closing the curtains.

Then the entertainment began: the tambourine was flung across the room; the trumpet was blown and an air was played on the accordion—to the excited plaudits of the sitters. Then the man's 'spirit control,' whose name I forget (it was, of course, one of the over-worked Red Indian 'guides') spoke in broken English—obviously for the benefit of the Britishers who were present. Then a small luminous cross was seen floating near where we knew the medium was sitting, and the performance finished with a shower of sparkling 'spirit lights', which spluttered hither and thither from somewhere behind the medium, who, it was seen, was now almost entirely free from his bonds. The room lights were then switched on and, the séance having ended, the sitters departed.

But I stayed on for a few minutes. Most of the performance was rather silly, and a poor imitation of the Davenport Brothers' feats. But the lights intrigued me, especially the luminous cross. I wondered how he obtained them, as he was really well searched. The woman had now drawn back the curtains and flung the window wide open. Then the whole thing was apparent. Outside the window was a long box containing plants. On the top of the soil was a heap of large beach pebbles to weight the box in order to

prevent the wind from blowing it over. I walked to the window and soon found what I anticipated—a large pebble covered with fulminating paste, which was hardly distinguishable from its fellows. This pebble, rubbed against a hard object, produced a percussive flash, such as we had seen. The next day I saw children playing on the Digue with something similar.

The medium and his wife watched me with some interest, if not alarm. Would I demand my money back, or inform the police? I did neither, but had an interesting chat with them instead, explaining who I was. They admitted that the whole show was, well, just a show, and said that if they were to run a boarding-house, they would be fleecing the visitors just the same. As I anticipated, when the woman opened the window just after the séance began, she picked the fulminating pebble, and another, from off the window-box and passed them to her husband. The luminous cross, I learned, was painted *on the sole of the man's right foot*, which he just waved round and round in the dark. The conversation was becoming most interesting, with an interchange of professional secrets, when we discovered it was nearly nine o'clock, the time advertised for the next séance. As I wended my way to the Kursaal to watch the gambling, an urchin thrust a bill in my hand. It read: *Votre main parle . . . la révélation de votre destinée. Chaque ligne de votre main marque un fait important dans votre vie. . . . Prix 25 francs.* But I had had enough of 'psychics' for one night, and I knew that the only 'palms' the Ostend mediums were really interested in were those containing good Belgian francs.

#### MEDIUMS' CONFESSIONS

I could fill this entire volume with accounts of fraudulent mediums, their exposures, and their confessions. And my list would not include the thousands of fortune-tellers who have fallen into the hands of the police.

Most fraudulent mediums confess when they are in a tight corner in order to save themselves from possible legal proceedings. Some, more honest, get sick of the whole business

and confess their frauds in order to ease their conscience.<sup>1</sup> In 1891, in America, a sensation was caused by the publication<sup>2</sup> of *The Revelations of a Spirit Medium*. In that same year it was 'entered according to Act of Congress in the Office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington.' That is, it was copyrighted. And that is all we know definitely about the book. The author was either Donovan, Charles F. Pidgeon, Frank N. Foster, or Mansfield, and bibliophiles have not yet decided which. But the work itself is a brilliant and detailed *exposé* of most of the tricks used by fraudulent mediums, who bought up all the copies they could find and destroyed them. The book is now of the extremest rarity. During a lifetime's collecting of rare books on magic I have found only three copies. One of these I sacrificed in order that a facsimile edition<sup>3</sup> could be produced by the anastatic process. This was edited by Dr. E. J. Dingwall and myself.

Another work, also anonymous (though supposed to have been written by Chapman), appeared in London in 1882 under the title of *Confessions of a Medium: and a series of articles, Confessions of a Bogus Medium: How I Made £1,000 a Year by Faked Séances* was published by a weekly journal.<sup>4</sup> It is well worth reading.

#### THE BEARE SENSATION

The most sensational confession by a medium during the past fifty years was that of Charles Albert Beare, the trance and trumpet medium and psychometrist. It was in 1920 that Mr. Beare first began to take a serious interest in spiritualism, after having practised conjuring tricks. He joined a spiritualist organization called the Temple of Light and soon blossomed out into a full-blown 'medium.'

After a few years Beare became thoroughly sick of the whole business and, to ease his mind, made a full confession.

<sup>1</sup> For example, that of Douglas Blackburn, whose 'Confessions of a Famous Medium' appeared in *John Bull*, December 5, 1908 to January 9, 1909.

<sup>2</sup> By Farrington & Co., St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.

<sup>3</sup> *Revelations of a Spirit Medium; or, Spiritualistic Mysteries Exposed. With Notes, Bibliography, Glossary and Index.* Ed. by Harry Price and E. J. Dingwall, London, 1922. (Sec. Ed., 1930.)

<sup>4</sup> In the *World's Pictorial News*, London, beginning February 20, 1920.

This was published in the *Daily Express*<sup>1</sup> for September 18, 1931. The interview makes remarkable reading. Beare says: 'I have deceived hundreds of people. . . . I have been guilty of fraud and deception in spiritualistic practices by pretending that I was controlled by a spirit guide. . . . I am frankly and whole-heartedly sorry that I have allowed myself to deceive people. . . . I believe that when they read my full and frank confession they will forgive me for the way I have deceived them, and I am convinced that spiritualists could not do better than clear their own ranks of the fraud and deception which I know exist in the greater part of these practices!'

An amusing feature of Beare's 'mediumship' is that he received a 'Diploma of Genuineness' (reproduced in facsimile by the *Daily Express*) from the Temple of Light. The certificate reads: 'This is to certify that Mr. C. A. Beare . . . has duly established, before the Board of Examiners, his claim to possess certain Spiritual Gifts, to wit: Clairvoyance and Psychometry . . . and the said person named herein was deemed to have successfully demonstrated such gifts to the satisfaction of the Board and is hereby passed as an Authorized Medium.'

Beare had to possess a 'spirit guide,' so he called it 'Shauna,' a Greek supposed to have lived 130 years ago. Sometimes the exotic 'Shauna' was a professor, sometimes a sheik—according to circumstances. Beare says: 'I used a sort of gibberish . . . anything that came into my head . . . in a muddled way. It was all for effect, but it usually went down all right.' Occasionally, the sitters declared that they could see 'Shauna' standing behind him.

On November 4, 1931, I persuaded Beare to address the members of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research. His talk, 'Adventures of a Pseudo-Medium' was very amusing. He told us how he used to speak down the trumpet, and he gave us imitations of 'Shauna' talking 'Greek.' When asked why he finally gave up his 'mediumship,' Beare replied: 'Because I got absolutely disgusted with what I saw and with myself!'

<sup>1</sup> 'Medium's Amazing Confession . . . Séance Frauds,' in the *Daily Express*, September 18, 1931, pp. 1 and 2.

## 'GAMBOLS WITH THE GHOSTS'

In order to produce their 'psychic' tricks, the less clever fakers have to rely on those persons who sell apparatus and 'secrets' to professional mediums. The existence of these mediums' supply houses is denied by those in the business, and I believe it is a fact that very few mediums in this country (where physical phenomena are rare) know of such places. But they do exist, and their proprietors *loan out* catalogues to those mediums in want of some new spiritualistic effect. Again, it is strenuously denied that such catalogues exist, or have existed.

Well, these catalogues *do* exist (See Plate VIII), but only just! They are issued *on loan* to only a chosen few, and they are so excessively rare that during a lifetime's search for a specimen, it was only during the production of this work that I came into possession of a copy, the only one in Great Britain. This was in the records of Mr. William Marriott, the well-known illusionist and veteran arch-debunker of 'spirit' fakes, who kindly presented it to me. I know of only one copy in America, in the collection of John Mulholland, who quotes extracts in his *Beware Familiar Spirits*.<sup>1</sup>

And now having at last obtained a copy of this almost unprocurable brochure, the least I can do is to tell my readers something about it. The title is: *Gambols with the Ghosts. Mind Reading, Spiritualistic Effects, Mental and Psychical Phenomena and Horoscopy*. It was issued in 1901 by Ralph E. Sylvestre & Co., of 25, Ashland Boulevard, Chicago, a firm 'Established in 1870.' On a label attached to the title-page is printed: 'Return to Geo. L. Williams & Co., Sole Agents, Syracuse, Indiana.' Apparently Williams issued these catalogues for private circulation among mediums, who had to return to him the list when goods had been selected. The miracles for sale in the copy I possess are catalogued 101-70. The 'effects' (but *not* the secrets!) are well illustrated by clever drawings, and the catalogue runs to forty pages.

In an introductory note 'To our Friends and Patrons,'

<sup>1</sup> New York and London, 1938.



Messrs. SLADE and LANCASTER,

In a Scene from the New Farce, "The Happy Medium; or,  
No Spirits should be above Proof."

1876

Cartoon from *Entr'acte and Limelight* of Henry Slade, the medium, and Professor Ray Lankester, October, 1876. Published after the prosecution of Slade.



of several sitters. Slate or slates can be taken away and kept by the sitter if desired. Price, complete .....\$10.00

112. Dark Seance Slate Writing.

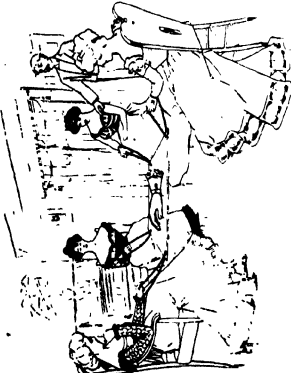
For canopy or cabinet work only, under test conditions. Two slates are examined, any question is written on paper by "sitter," sealed and sewed in an envelope, which is placed between the slates; these are then tied and sealed together. In a short time when reopened an answer to the question is found written on inside of slates and envelope is undisturbed. Price.....\$10.00

113. Non Plus Ultra Slate Writing Test.

In this remarkably fine test, a finely finished small box is used, this box is of a size to hold the slate, and is securely closed with

130. Spirit Rapping Table.

This is particularly for mediums who have their own apartments, yet is easily used in any room where the table can be placed. In appearance it is an ordinary finely finished library table, bears minute examination, and is portable. When circle is formed around table it emits raps as desired. Can be used at any time, no previous preparation necessary. Infalible in every respect. Price.....\$50.00



140. The 20th Century Rapping Hand.

This creation is certainly the most wonderful effect of its kind; the equal of it has never yet been devised. A fine model of a

132. Self Playing Guitars.

Indispensable for mediums. Finely finished Guitars. In dark seances they play without medium's hands touching them. Price, .....\$25.00

153. Balmain's Luminous Paint.

The only perfect luminous paint made, can be applied to most everything for illuminating articles used in dark seances. Price for jar with instructions.....\$1.50

154. Modern Sealed Letter Reading.

Sealed letters, or questions in them, easily read without seal or envelope being disturbed. This is one of medium's favorites. Very striking and convincing and easily worked. Can be done in presence of investigator. Price.....\$1.00



155. Washington Irving Bishop's Sealed Letter Reading.

His original manner of reading sealed letters in presence of the audience. Our instructions are all that is necessary. Price....\$1.00

Mr. Sylvestre writes: 'Our experience during the past thirty years in supplying mediums and others with the peculiar effects in this line enable us to place before you only those which are practical and of use, nothing that you have to experiment with. All of our effects are equally suitable for ladies or gentlemen except where mentioned. We wish you to thoroughly appreciate that, while we do not, for obvious reasons, mention the names of our clients and their work (they being kept in strict confidence, the same as a physician treats his patients), we can furnish you with the explanation and, where necessary, the materials for the production of any known public "tests" or "phenomena" not mentioned in this, our latest list. You are aware *that our effects are being used by nearly all prominent mediums . . . of the entire world,*<sup>1</sup> and you can, therefore, be assured of receiving fraternal and honest treatment in all transactions. . . . There are, as you are aware, sporadic attempts at exposure of mediums, and of slurs in the press at the same and at ourselves. We do not countenance or support the former and utterly ignore the latter. In our mental feats are found much to ponder over, and prove the truth of the immortal Goethe's history of the friendly philosophers in his wonderful work on *Electoral Affinities*, while in our mechanical appliances the work is absolutely faultless.'

#### CHEAP MIRACLES

And now for the effects themselves. For one dollar you can purchase a simple slate-writing miracle (instructions only): 'Any ordinary single or double slate is examined, thoroughly washed, and either held by sitter or hung to chandelier for a few moments; when opened a message is found thereon.' Another slate-writing feat 'for close circles,' which will provide answers to 'questions asked by investigators,' cost only \$1.50. For the same sum you can produce 'Instantaneous Spirit Writing,' the 'recent invention of a prominent English medium.' The *modus operandi* is that 'the medium asks for a visiting card of anyone present, and holds it up in full view in one hand, and while waving the card

<sup>1</sup> My italics.



about slowly he asks for the name of any celebrity or person, living or dead. On same being pronounced, he at once hands card for inspection and the selected name is found written thereon.' Surely a cheap miracle for only \$1.50. Other slate-writing phenomena, even more miraculous, are priced as high as \$10.00 each.

The first requisite for a fake physical medium starting in business is, of course, the humble but useful reaching-rod. Mr. Sylvestre sells them: 'Telescopic Reaching Rod. A very useful article for mediums working in the dark. They go in pocket and extend from four to six feet . . . will pick up or bring to you any ordinary small object, float a guitar, etc., \$4.00.' The guitar mentioned is a self-playing one: 'Indispensable for mediums. Finely finished Guitars. In dark séances they play without medium's hands touching them. Price \$25.00.'

#### 'CONVINCING' SPOOKS

No dark séance is complete without a materialization or two. As Mr. Sylvestre himself says: 'For all materializing mediums, the production of luminous hands or faces is a *sine quâ non* for their success. We furnish you complete with explicit directions for the making and production of same, or furnish them complete and ready for use as desired. Also draperies, head-dresses, and ornaments of the finest quality known. \$5.00 to \$25.00.' For full-form apparitions the price is, of course, higher: 'Luminous Materialistic Ghosts and Forms. All kinds and sizes. Full luminous female form and dress (with face that convinces) which can be produced in ordinary room or circle, appears gradually, floats about room and disappears. \$50.00.'

The mental medium is not forgotten. Mr. Sylvestre will supply 'Clairvoyant and Psychic Readings for Private Sitzings.' The system is sold to billet-readers, 'under certain written conditions only,' and costs \$25.00. The effect is described as follows: 'The sitter enters the medium's parlour and is seated anywhere. He is requested to write his questions on an ordinary piece of paper, and keep same in his

possession, the medium is not necessarily present during the writings, yet he, in a few seconds, is in full knowledge of what was written, although he does not handle or touch the paper on which questions were written. . . . We wish to impress upon you that in this there is nothing used that has been made use of in somewhat similar effects in times past.' I wonder! Mr. Sylvestre must have forgotten his classics, or he would have remembered that the famous impostor and false prophet Alexander the Paphlagonian, of Abonouteichos (the modern Ineboli) in Asia Minor, established an oracle of the snake-god Glycon-Asclepius and he, too, gave answers to sealed messages, but was not always successful.<sup>1</sup> Alexander, who 'flourished' about A.D. 150, must surely have been the first fake billet-reader in history. Lucian the Satirist has left us an amusing and detailed record of his 'psychic' frauds, his 'intelligence bureau' in Rome, etc.

But to return to *Gambols with the Ghosts*. In Mr. Sylvestre's fascinating catalogue you will find details and prices of spirit jugs; trick ropes for binding mediums; 'matter through matter' effects; fire tests; fake padlocks, bolts, handcuffs, benches, shackles and staples; mechanical and self-rapping tables, chairs, bells, hands and skulls; fake spirit sacks, bags and trunks; rapping tests 'as used by D. D. Home'; mind-reading, clairvoyant, second sight and psychometry tests (one of the latter having been reduced from \$100.00 to \$25.00) and complete mesmeric and hypnotic shows, etc. Then of course there are the incidentals necessary to every good physical medium, such as luminous paint, spirit robes, pasteboard hands, rubber 'spirits,' etc. Finally, for the youngster just starting out in the world and wishing to make good, there is the 'Complete Spiritualistic Séance,' which includes spirit slate-writing, table turning, rapping, and lifting, sealed letter reading, fire-resisting effects (such as handling heated lamp chimneys or holding handkerchiefs in a naked flame without burning)—all for \$25.00, 'express charges prepaid' to any address. Now we know what to do with our sons!

My only comment on this precious catalogue is that

<sup>1</sup> Like the fake billet-reader of to-day, he used heated needles for surreptitiously removing seals from closed missives. (See Lucian's *Alexander*).

although Mr. Sylvestre reveals no secrets, practically all the effects are explained in *The Revelations of a Spirit Medium*, published anonymously in 1891 and written by a medium (either Donovan, Charles F. Pidgeon, Frank N. Foster or J. V. Mansfield) who suddenly 'got religion' and 'blew the gaff' with a vengeance.

Mr. Mulholland became friendly with one of these mediums' outfitters, and was permitted to examine his books. Out of 2,000 customers, he recognized the names of several famous American mediums. In his book, my friend also reproduces an advertisement giving the current prices of 'certificates of ordination' for mediums. One can become a 'reverend' for \$10.00, a 'D.D.' for \$5.00, and a 'bishop' for five times that sum. These ordinations are cheap at the price, as under American law, the clergy can travel at special fares on the railroads.

#### THE ONLY REMEDY

The only remedy for all the fraud, humbug, and deception exemplified in this chapter is to examine and register professional mediums and control their activities in some way. The curse of fraudulent mediumship can be met only by legislation. To this end I have designed a Bill,<sup>1</sup> which I hope will some day reach the Statute Book. I have had the assistance of Mr. Gordon Alchin, the distinguished barrister, who has drafted the Bill for Parliament, where, in due course, it will be presented and sponsored by a well-known lawyer M.P. The Bill will have the effect of stimulating scientific investigation and will confer upon the genuine medium a *cachet* he could not otherwise obtain. Conversely, the professional fraudulent medium will find his nefarious trade both difficult and dangerous. It will also make spiritualism 'respectable' in the eyes of the public. If the *Psychic Practitioners (Regulation) Bill* ever becomes law, we shall hear much less of the seamy side of spiritualism.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix C.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE LAW AND THE MEDIUM

IT is fortunate for modern mediums, genuine and otherwise, that they ply their trade in the reign of George VI, and not, for example, in the days of Henry VIII. In this reign a law,<sup>1</sup> *An Acte conc'nyng Egyptsyans* (i.e. gypsies), was passed which provided the severest punishments for 'fortune-telling' and similar offences. Anyone using 'greate subtyll and crafty meanes to deceyve the people, beryng them in hande, that they by Palmestre coulde telle menne and women's fortunes, and so many tymes by crafte and subtyltie have deceyved the people of theyr money' was to leave the country within sixteen days of the proclamation. The next Act<sup>2</sup> also penalized, to the extent of £40, any person conveying into England such 'Egiptians,' who, after a sojourn of one month, automatically became felons. During the reign of Elizabeth an Act<sup>3</sup> was directed 'agaynst fonde and phantasticall Prophetys'—especially when these concerned the death of the monarch.

In 1597, another Elizabethan Act:<sup>4</sup> *An Acte for Punishment of Rogues, Vagabonds, and Sturdie Beggars*, increased the punishments for what we should now call 'mediumship.' For instance, it applied to 'All idle persons going about in any countrey either begging or using any subtile craft, of fayning themselves to have knowledge in Physiognomie, Palmestry, or other like crafty science, or pretending that they can tell destinies, fortunes, or such other like fantastickall imaginations. . . . And all such persons not being felons, wandering and pretending themselves to be Egyptians, or wandering in the habite, forme, or attire of counterfeite Egyptians, shall

<sup>1</sup> 22 Hy. VIII, c. 10 and 11 (1530-1).

<sup>2</sup> 1 and 2 Ph. and M., C. 4.

<sup>3</sup> 5 Eliz. c. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Of the two known copies of the original, one is in the 'Harry Price Library of Magical Literature,' University of London.

be taken, adjudged and deemed Rogues, Vagabonds, and sturdy beggars, and shall susteine such paine and punishments, as by this Acte is in that behalfe appointed.'

#### TRANSPORTATION FOR FORTUNE-TELLING

Any person convicted under the above Act shall 'bee striped naked from the middle upwards, and shall be openly whipped until his or her body be bloody: and shall be forthwith sent from Parish to Parish, by the Officers of every the same, the next straight way to the Parish where hee was borne. . . . After which whipping the said person shall have a testimonial subscribed with the hand, and Sealed . . . mentioning the day and place of his or her punishment, and the place whereunto such person is limited to goe, and by what time the said person is limited to passe thither at his perill. And if the said person through his or her default do not accomplish the order appointed by the said testimoniall, then to be eftsoones taken and whipped, and so as often as any default shall be found in him or her, contrary to the forme of this Statute, in every place to be whipped till such person be repayred to the place limited.'

Should the fortune-teller or 'Egyptian' 'appeare to bee dangerous to the inferior sort of people where they shall be taken, or otherwise be such as will not be reformed of their rogish kind of life,' they shall 'be banished out of this Realme . . . and conveyed into such parts beyond the seas . . . or otherwise be judged perpetually to the Galleis of this Realme. . . . And if any such Rogue so banished as afore-said shall returne againe into any part of this Realme or dominion of Wales, without lawfull licence, such offence shall be felony, and the partie offending therein suffer death as in the case of felony.'

Very curiously, the above Act specifically states that nothing therein shall apply to 'the poore people in S. Thomas Hospitall, in the Borough of Southwarke' and 'shall not in any wise extend to dishenherite, prejudice or hinder John Dutton of Dutton, in the County of Chester Esquier, his heires or assignes'; or to children under the age of seven years.

Cromwell's Parliament of 1656 found that the Elizabethan fortune-telling Act was rarely administered. Also, such crimes were 'much increased, by reason of some Defects in the Laws and Statutes heretofore made.' To remedy this state of affairs, a further Act<sup>1</sup> was introduced by the Lord Protector to strengthen the Statute made in the thirty-ninth year of Elizabeth.

#### ANCIENT LAWS FOR MODERN MEDIUMS

The laws against fortune-telling and prophesying became gradually less severe. On June 21, 1824, a new Act<sup>2</sup> was published, which is in force to-day, and under which fortune-tellers and the like, and some mediums, are now prosecuted. Section IV reads: 'Every Person pretending or professing to tell Fortunes, or using any subtle Crafts, Means, or Device, by Palmistry or otherwise, to deceive and impose on any of His Majesty's subjects . . . shall be deemed a Rogue and Vagabond, within the true Intent and Meaning of this Act; and it shall be lawful for any Justice of the Peace to commit such offender (being thereof convicted before him by the Confession of such Offender, or by the Evidence on Oath of one or more credible Witness or Witnesses) to the House of Correction, there to be kept to hard Labour for any Time not exceeding Three Calendar Months.'

Under the above Act (which, I reiterate, is still in force) a fortune-teller, palmist, or 'medium' can be arrested on sight 'by any Person whatsoever' who can 'deliver him or her to any Constable or other Peace Officer.' In this Act mediums find themselves in the dubious company of prostitutes, pick-pockets, reputed thieves, wife-beaters and 'everyone obscenely exposing his Person in any Street.'

<sup>1</sup> *An Act Against Vagrants, and Wandring, idle, dissolute persons. At the Parliament begun at Westminster the 17th day of September, An. Dom. 1656.*

<sup>2</sup> 5 Geo. IV, c. 83, Section IV.

## LAWS PROHIBITING SPIRIT INTERCOURSE

Parallel with the fortune-telling or vagrancy Acts went another set of laws directed against those having intercourse with spirits. That the authorities fully believed that such intercourse was possible is obvious from the wording of the Acts, and the severity of the punishments for these crimes. The first<sup>1</sup> was introduced in 1541 and was intended to suppress black magic,<sup>2</sup> witchcraft, calling up spirits, invocations, enchantments, and what we now know as 'séances,' 'to the great Offence of Godes lawe, hurt and damage of the Kinges Subjectes, and losse of the Sowles of such Offenders.'<sup>2</sup> The penalty was forfeiture of all belongings, and death without privilege of clergy or sanctuary. The Act was repealed in 1547,<sup>3</sup> but was revived by Elizabeth.<sup>4</sup> 'Deathe as a Felon' was the punishment for a second offence. James I repealed the Elizabethan Act, but substituted one<sup>5</sup> just as severe. James himself tells us what he knows about spirits, and his book<sup>6</sup> makes remarkable reading. In 1735 George II repealed<sup>7</sup> the Acts of both Elizabeth and James, and in 1863 the *Statute Law Revision Act* had the effect of finally abolishing the official belief in the possibility of spirits and demons. The 1735 Act made 'pretending' to be a medium an offence punishable with one year's imprisonment 'without Bail or Mainprize,' and one hour in the pillory every quarter-day!

## MODERN ATTEMPTS AT REFORM

The above brief historical sketch of the British laws directed against 'psychic' activities is necessary to enable the reader to appreciate why and how fortune-tellers are now

<sup>1</sup> 33 Henry VII, c. 8.

<sup>2</sup> The complete text, and a full historical account of British legislation against supernatural practices is given in *Psychic Science in Parliament* by 'Angus Mac-Arthur,' London, 1916.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Ed. VI.

<sup>4</sup> 5 Eliz., c. 16.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Jac. I, c. 12, *An Act against Conjuration, Witchcraft, and dealing with Evil and Wicked Spirits*. For text, see *Psychic Science in Parliament*.

<sup>6</sup> *Daemonologie, in Forme of a Dialogue*, Edin., 1597. (London, 1603.)

<sup>7</sup> *An Act to Repeal the Statute, etc.*

prosecuted. They are usually proceeded against under the 1824 Act of George IV. Those fortune-tellers calling themselves 'mental mediums' are also convicted under the same Act. But fraudulent physical mediums, on the rare occasions when they are prosecuted, are usually charged with obtaining money under false pretences, under the common law. But it is quite clear that any person 'pretending or professing' to practise mediumship of any sort, genuine or not, and whether or not for money or other valuable consideration, can be proceeded against under existing laws, and the genuineness of the phenomena would be no defence. The astrological 'predictions' published in our popular Press must also be illegal, according to the 1824 and 1735 Acts. A year or so ago, Lord Hewart, the Lord Chief Justice, in commenting upon certain 'forecasts' published in a Sunday paper, called them a 'collection of imbecile and repulsive twaddle.'<sup>1</sup>

Attempts at reforming the present state of the law have been few and sporadic. Parliament is apathetic concerning such matters. On July 1, 1930, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, just before his death, headed a deputation to the Home Secretary in an attempt to make it *easier* for mediums. Nothing came of it. On November 26, 1930, Alderman W. T. Kelly, M.P. for Rochdale, introduced a Bill into Parliament which would have had the effect of making mediumship legal, when the medium was licensed by a registered spiritualist or psychical society, or someone approved by the Home Office. It was eventually 'talked out.' In Germany, 'official' spiritualism has been completely suppressed, though, as we have seen in Chapter III, scientific psychical research is accepted by the authorities. A few private mediums are still 'working'. In France, the general public cares little about psychical research or spiritualism, though a few fortune-tellers (for example,

<sup>1</sup> How the 'astrological' racket is worked in Paris was revealed in the *London Times* (June 16, 1938), when a number of fortune-tellers were fined sums varying from £170 to £30 on a charge of obtaining money under false pretences: 'Evidence given during the proceedings revealed an astonishingly systematic arrangement by which standard horoscopes were drawn up for each age, sex, and condition for every month of the year, and automatically doled out to the credulous in return for their money. The "fakirs" appear to have shown an expensive lack of interest in their own destinies.'



Madame Deux-Thèbes,<sup>1</sup> who died in December, 1937) have become notorious. In Italy, as in all totalitarian states, fortune-telling and mediumship are frowned upon.

The Scandinavian countries are generally hostile to spiritualism and fortune-telling, and apathetic concerning all psychic matters. On March 14, 1931, Mauritz Hellberg presented to the Swedish Parliament a Bill<sup>2</sup> relating to psychic matters. It was intended to regularize mediumship and put psychical research on a scientific footing. Nothing came of it, and spiritualism has now been suppressed in Sweden; also in Rumania.

An amusing account of fortune-telling in Japan was published in the *Observer*,<sup>3</sup> where it was stated that popular occultism is under the close supervision of the police, who state that there are few complaints about the fees charged 'because the prophecies are couched in such ambiguous terms that some parts of them are almost certain to come true.'<sup>4</sup> Apparently, fortune-telling in Japan is based on the same principles as in other parts of the world.

If fortune-telling is on the increase in Japan, the Poles are appealing to the police to suppress these superstitions. Early in 1938 the various religious bodies started a campaign urging the Government to make such practices illegal.<sup>5</sup>

#### HOUDINI AND THE FORTUNE-TELLERS

The United States of America are, of course, the happy hunting-ground of the fake medium, fortune-teller and every type of charlatan who preys on credulity. In an attempt to remedy this state of affairs 'Harry Houdini' (i.e. Ehrich Weiss),<sup>6</sup> noted showman and conjurer and foe of all mediums, good and bad, gave evidence before the District of Columbia House of Representatives, February 26 and May 18, 20 and 21, 1926. The occasion was a Bill (H.R. 8989) introduced

<sup>1</sup> For life and work, see *Evening News*, December 10, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> *Riksdagens Protokoll. Första Kammaren*, No. 19, Stockholm, March 14, 1931, pp. 21-44.

<sup>3</sup> London, July 3, 1938.

<sup>4</sup> *Observer*, loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup> *Observer*, London, January 30, 1938.

<sup>6</sup> Died October 31, 1926.

by Sol Bloom, representative in Congress from the State of New York, to make fortune-telling illegal. The text of the Bill, which is reminiscent of our own vagrancy laws, is as follows:

‘Any person pretending to tell fortunes for reward or compensation where lost or stolen goods may be found; any person who, by game or device, sleight of hand, pretending, fortune-telling, or by any trick or other means, by the use of cards or other implements or instruments, fraudulently obtains from another person money or property or reward, property of any description; any person pretending to remove spells, or to sell charms for protection, or to unite the separated, shall be considered a disorderly person . . . and shall be punished by a fine not to exceed \$250 or by imprisonment not to exceed six months, or by both such fine and imprisonment.’

The chief interest of this Bill is the evidence of the many witnesses called by proponents and opponents. Harry Houdini was the principal witness called to support the Bill, and he took the opportunity of relieving himself of certain *obiter dicta* which were highly typical of the man: ‘There are only two kinds of mediums, those who are mental degenerates and who ought to be under observation; and those who are deliberate cheats and frauds.’ Again, ‘I would not believe a fraudulent medium under oath; perjury means nothing to them; I say that no human being possesses mediumistic powers.’ And again: ‘I have examined 300 mediums . . . if there are any genuine, I have never met one.’ These, and many similar statements can be read in the extremely interesting Government report<sup>1</sup> issued after the inquiry, at which Houdini’s detectives gave evidence. Those who testified against the Bill included mediums, clairvoyants, astrologers, ‘believers,’ etc., and a great part of the early history of spiritualism was discussed by one side or the other. The final decision arrived at appeared to be that there was already in existence an Act of Congress,<sup>2</sup> approved July 1, 1902, which could be used against fraudulent fortune-tellers.

<sup>1</sup> *Fortune-Telling. Hearings before the Sub-Committee on Judiciary of the Committee on the District of Columbia House of Representatives . . . H.R. 8989, Washington, D.C., 1926 (169 pp.).* Houdini sent me a copy on publication.

<sup>2</sup> 32 Stat. 622.

It emerged from the inquiry that clairvoyants, mediums, etc., are licensed to practise in the District of Columbia on payment of \$25 per annum. The difference between a fortune-teller and a medium was also given: 'The fortune-teller is one who pretends to tell you of coming events without any basis of present observed condition for forming that opinion. The medium may receive a communication from the spirit world which foretells coming events, but it is merely an incident to the communication, because a spirit is able to form opinion based upon the condition he observed in the spirit side of life that the human cannot observe from this side of life.'<sup>1</sup> The inquiry was enlivened by Houdini doing a number of slate tricks and trumpet 'phenomena,' and during the hearing of one witness the magician dramatically threw on to the Chairman's table a roll containing \$10,000 in notes which he offered to give to any medium present who could produce a phenomenon that he (Houdini) could not duplicate by conjuring under the same conditions.

#### MEDIUMS WHO AID THE POLICE

It has often been suggested that, on account of their varied claims to clairvoyance, prevision, etc., mediums should assist the police in elucidating crimes and detecting criminals. As a matter of fact, this has often been done. Frau Lotte Plaat, the German psychometrist, frequently helped the police. I invited her to London in 1930, and was impressed with her psychometric powers and general clairvoyance. Frau Plaat was regularly employed by the German police in tracing malefactors and in 1930 she was in France for the same purpose. During her visit to London, someone from Scotland Yard rang me up and asked me whether I should be willing, if invited, to lend Frau Platt to help them—unofficially, of course—in a case on which they were engaged. I said I would, and next morning spent an hour at the 'Yard' discussing the matter. The case was that of a woman thought to have been murdered in Cheshire, and it was decided that I should approach the Chief Constable of that county. I at

<sup>1</sup> *Fortune-Telling*, op. cit., p. 41.

once telegraphed to that gentleman, who replied that the local police had the matter in hand and could not be interfered with. Frau Plaat has been under the observation of many distinguished scientists, including Dr. Paul Sünner, Dr. Gustave Pagenstecher, Dr. Harms, Professor Ludwig Jahn, Professor Kasnacich and others, who have recorded<sup>1</sup> brilliant results with her.

Another psychic who frequently aided the police was 'Erik Jan Hanussen' (Hermann Steinschneider), the German clairvoyant, medium and vaudeville occultist. But in 1930, when 'practising' at Leitmeritz, Czechoslovakia, he was arrested and charged under a local fortune-telling by-law with obtaining money under false pretences. He demanded that his powers should be examined. A test in court was decided upon and the room in which the séance was held was guarded by gendarmes with fixed bayonets. The clairvoyance experiments satisfied the court, and he was acquitted. In one test he described a motor accident and in another the scene at a birth. But he fell into disfavour in Germany, and a year or so after the Czechoslovakian incident, was found murdered in a Berlin suburb.<sup>2</sup>

A famous case of a medium being tested in court was that of Frau Elsa Günther-Geffers, a clairvoyant and wife of the head of an agricultural school, who was tried at Insterburg, East Prussia, in May, 1928, for obtaining money under false pretences. The case was an appeal by the Public Prosecutor from a verdict of acquittal given by a lower court. She demanded that her powers should be tried in court and this was granted. A police sergeant was brought from a remote village, to whom, alone of those present in court, were known the details of a theft committed in the district a few months before the trial. The thief had not yet been discovered and even his name was unknown to the police. The problem given to the medium was to reconstruct the crime and to name the criminal.

The court was cleared for the experiment and Frau Günther-Geffers rapidly fell into a trance. In answer to

<sup>1</sup> See *Die psychometrische Begabung der Frau Lotte Plaat*. . . . Ed. by Paul Sünner, Leipzig, 1929.

<sup>2</sup> See his *Meine Lebenslinie*, Berlin, 1930.

questions as to when the theft occurred she answered 'February.' She also said she saw 'silver objects which glittered'; a fur; a large building with dark furniture; the thief eating a sausage; and many other details, including the names of the person who had lost the property and that of the alleged thief.

Almost without exception, every statement made by the medium was proved to be true. Twelve silver marks and a fur had been lost by a Herr von Reibnitz, who was aged eighty-nine (the medium said 'nearly seventy'), and the thief had entered his *Schloss* through an open window. Frau Günther-Geffers gave all these facts correctly, and also the name (Dumke) of the alleged thief, which was not verified. The clairvoyant concluded her amazing display by giving a correct description of the complicated wanderings of a watch which had been lost on the parade ground by a Reichswehr Colonel. The President of the court, in acquitting her, said he was 'simply dumbfounded.' The case caused such a sensation that the Governor of Königsberg, within whose jurisdiction the town of Insterburg lies, was compelled to issue an order forbidding the police in future to employ mediums and clairvoyants in connection with detective work.<sup>1</sup>

Another 'psychic,' or rather hyperæsthete, who claims to have assisted the police is 'Marion' (Josef Kraus). In the *London Forum*<sup>2</sup> can be found an interesting account of the way in which his powers led to the conviction of a man who was suspected by the police in the town of Ulm (Württemberg) of the murder of his brother. Marion visualized all the circumstances of the crime, and finally described how the victim was attacked from behind with an axe which was afterwards thrown into a pond. The police found the weapon in the spot indicated, and the alleged murderer then made a full confession. A number of British dowrsers have also claimed to have found the bodies of missing persons in ponds and rivers, and to have helped the police with their divining-rods in various ways.

<sup>1</sup> For full details of this case see: *Ist Hellsehen möglich? Der Insterburger 'Hexen'-Prozess gegen das kriminal-telepathische Medium Frau Günther-Geffers*, by Reinhold Zenz, Königsberg, 1928. Brief reports of the trial were given in the London Press in issues, May 4 to 14, 1928.

<sup>2</sup> June, 1934, pp. 387-94.

## SOME 'CAUSES CÉLBÈRES'

The most famous legal case connected with psychical research was that in which a widow, Mrs. Jane Lyon, aged seventy-five, adopted the medium D. D. Home as her son on condition that he changed his name to Home-Lyon. The spirit of her deceased husband, working through Home, commanded her to do this. The same spirit also induced her to give him a fortune of £30,000 in cash and to settle upon him a similar amount. This silly old woman finally came to her senses and demanded that Home should disgorge the money. He refused, and Mrs. Lyon brought an action alleging 'undue influence.' Vice-Chancellor Gifford decided that the gifts could not be retained, though at the same time he stated that the plaintiff had persistently lied during her evidence, and he refused her costs. This was in 1868.<sup>1</sup>

In 1903 a similar case came up for trial and caused a major sensation. It was known as the 'Great Planchette Case.' A young man of fortune named Henry Sheppard Hart Cavendish, aged twenty-six, brought an action against a Major Charles Henry Strutt, his wife Madeline, and a solicitor named Alfred Washington Guest Ranger, to set aside a voluntary settlement whereby he gave Major Strutt and his wife almost absolute control of his estate. Cavendish—like Mrs. Lyon—pleaded 'undue influence,' as Mrs. Strutt, who dabbled in the occult, had persuaded him by spirit messages purporting to come from his deceased mother and the arch-angels Gabriel, Michael, and Uriel. These 'messages' arrived *via* table-tipping, Mrs. Strutt's automatic writing, and especially the planchette.<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Strutt herself interpreted these messages. After several days' hearing<sup>3</sup> Mr. Justice Byrne said he would reserve judgment. This was delivered two months later<sup>4</sup> (May 13, 1903), and he ordered the settlement to be set aside—with costs.

<sup>1</sup> See *The Times*, April 22–30; May 1, 2, 23; July 15, 18; Aug. 1, 1868.

<sup>2</sup> A heart-shaped piece of wood, with two pentagraph wheels at the base, and a pencil at the apex.

<sup>3</sup> See *The Times*, February 28; March 3–18, 1903. For pictures of the case, see *Illustrated London News*, March 7, 1903.

<sup>4</sup> *The Times*, May 14, December 11, 1903.

## RAPE AND RHABDOMANCY

In 1901 an American medium named Ann O'Delia Diss Debar was sentenced in London for 'aiding and abetting' her paramour to rape a young girl at their 'Theocratic Unity' temple in Park Road, Regent's Park. She received seven years' penal servitude. The man, Frank D. Jackson, got fifteen years. When in this country they called themselves the Swami Laura Horos and Theodore Horos, and told fortunes, divined for lost property, read the cards, held séances and—ran a 'Purity League.' They were not without humour.

The case<sup>1</sup> was tried before Mr. Justice Bigham (afterwards Viscount Mersey, 1840–1929) and was a major sensation on account of the horrible disclosures. The police had obtained the medium's criminal *dossier* from America and the full story is told by John Mulholland in *Beware Familiar Spirits*.<sup>2</sup> It makes astonishing reading. Born in Kentucky in 1849, Diss Debar was in and out of prison over a number of years, under many aliases, and her convictions were usually concerned with 'psychic' frauds.

## 'THE £1,000 GHOST'

A year or so later another famous case, known as the 'Thousand Pound Ghost,' provided this country with a good deal of amusement. In 1877, when Archdeacon Thomas Colley (*d.* 1912), Rector of Stockton, Rugby, was having a séance with the infamous medium and ex-Baptist minister, the Rev. 'Dr.' Monck, a vapour-like substance appeared to exude from the left side of Monck and formed itself into various apparitions: a child, a beautiful woman, Mahdi, an Oriental, Samuel, etc. They were then reabsorbed by the medium. An account of these séances was published<sup>3</sup> at the time.

<sup>1</sup> See *The Times*, December 21, 1901.

<sup>2</sup> New York and London, 1938, pp. 251–61.

<sup>3</sup> *Medium and Daybreak*, November 2, 1877.

In 1906, the Archdeacon wrote of these things in a pamphlet,<sup>1</sup> a copy of which he sent to John Nevil Maskelyne, the conjurer, who had taken part in a controversy on spiritualism in the *Daily Telegraph*.<sup>2</sup> With the pamphlet was a letter from Colley, who offered to give Maskelyne £1,000 if he could reproduce Monck's phenomena, 'with all the machinery he may need,' at Stockton Rectory. He finally amended the terms of the challenge in order that Maskelyne could reproduce Monck's tricks 'any way, anywhere, at any time, as a conjurer.' In a letter to the *Daily Express*, dated June 11, 1906, Maskelyne accepted.

Maskelyne duly staged at St. George's Hall the illusion known as 'The Side Issue' and claimed the £1,000. Colley refused to pay, as he said that the conjurer's version of Monck's 'miracle' was a travesty. Maskelyne sued Colley for the money. Colley counter-claimed for damages for an alleged libel published in Maskelyne's pamphlet,<sup>3</sup> in which it was stated that 'he is not an Archdeacon and never was one.' Maskelyne lost on the claim and counter-claim, and had to pay £75 damages and costs for libelling the Archdeacon. Alfred Russel Wallace gave evidence for Colley. Looking at the case in retrospect, it appears remarkable that Maskelyne failed to secure the £1,000, as it was stated in evidence that in 1876 (the year before Colley sat with him) Monck was exposed at Huddersfield by an amateur conjurer named H. B. Lodge, who insisted upon searching the medium's luggage. In it were found the usual 'spirit hand,' 'spirit lamps,' a 'spirit bird,' cheese cloth, hold-outs for floating tambourines, reaching-rods, etc., and a number of obscene letters from women. The police prosecuted Monck, who was sentenced to three months' imprisonment.

Apropos of Maskelyne, it has been often stated that this *doyen* of British conjurers ridiculed all psychic phenomena. This is incorrect, as I have pointed out elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> In the *Pall Mall Gazette*<sup>5</sup> he publicly stated that he believed in table-turning, and in the *Strand Magazine* for January, 1910, gave

<sup>1</sup> *Spiritualism not Satanic*, London, 1906.

<sup>2</sup> April 16, 1906.

<sup>3</sup> *The History of a Thousand Pound Challenge*, London, 1906.

<sup>4</sup> 'John Nevil Maskelyne as a Believer in the Occult,' *Light*, October 11, 1924.

<sup>5</sup> April 25, 1885.



a graphic account of an accident which befell him as a boy. He was bathing one day and was carried out of his depth. Just before he became unconscious, he plainly saw his mother's anxiety. He was rescued and on his returning home his mother admitted that at the precise moment of the accident she knew he was in great danger.

#### POLICE RAID THE SPIRITUALISTS

Consternation was caused in the camp of the spiritualists when the police raided one of their strongholds, the London Spiritualist Alliance. In June, 1928, three summonses each were issued against Mrs. Claire Cantlon, a medium employed by the Alliance, and Miss Mercy Phillimore, the secretary of the L.S.A. It was stated in evidence that, on the instructions of the Commissioner of Police, Detective-Inspector Walter Burnaby of Scotland Yard sent, at different times, three women to the L.S.A. to book séances with a medium. These 'sitters' were Miss Lilian Wyles, Inspector of Women Police; Miss Violet Ritchie, a woman police patrol, and a Mrs. Dorothy Harrison. Miss Wyles paid 17s. 6d. for her sitting, of which Mrs. Cantlon, the medium in question, received 12s. 6d. The séance was held on April 18, 1928.

In due course, the summonses were served on Mrs. Cantlon who was accused of having 'professed to tell fortunes' and on Miss Phillimore for 'aiding and abetting.' Proceedings were instituted under the Vagrancy [fortune-telling] Act of 1824.

The case was heard at Westminster Police Court on July 11, 18, and 24, 1928, the magistrate being Mr. W. H. S. Oulton. Sir Patrick Hastings, K.C., and Mr. Eustace Fulton appeared for Miss Phillimore, Mr. P. W. Bullock represented Mrs. Cantlon, and Mr. H. D. Roome, K.C., was the prosecuting counsel.

The defence was that the medium was *not* telling fortunes, and that in any case, as she was in a trance, she knew nothing of what transpired. She later pleaded guilty to a technical offence. The charge against Miss Phillimore was purely technical and she pleaded 'not guilty.'

In evidence, Miss Wyles stated that Mrs. Cantlon informed her that her (the medium's) control was a North American Indian called White Chief who died 400 years ago. In trance, the medium described the spirit of a little boy named Alec or Eric 'who had his white rabbit with him.' The witness knew of no such boy. Next was described 'an old man of noble appearance,' named William; also an aunt Ellen or Eleanor. Miss Wyles had no aunt, alive or dead, answering to the name or description given, and did not recognize the old man. A 'sister' of the witness was then described. But she had no sister. Miss Wyles's 'husband' was described as 'a tall, dark man, with blue or hazel eyes,' temperamental, and Irish; that they had parted, but they would be reconciled to each other. Miss Wyles was unmarried. Near the end of the séance the medium asked the time and told the witness that she could give her ten minutes more.

The other police witnesses gave similar evidence. Miss Ritchie said the medium gave her the names of Charles, George, Mary, Leonard and Bobby. 'Bobby' was her own nickname, and she had a brother Leonard. Her 'husband' was described, but she was unmarried. The medium told Mrs. Harrison that she had two children, aged eight and twelve. The boy 'had a delicate chest.' Mrs. Harrison's children were aged fourteen and eighteen, and both were quite strong.

Among the witnesses for the defence were Sir A. Conan Doyle, President of the L.S.A., and Sir Oliver Lodge. Sir Ernest Bennett, M.P., sat with the magistrate during part of the proceedings.

In delivering judgment, Mr. Oulton said: 'I do not suppose that my views on spiritualism are of much moment to anybody except myself. . . . I have a perfectly open mind on the subject. There is no dispute by either defendant as to the substantial accuracy of the police evidence. Three witnesses have testified to the telling of the future by Mrs. Cantlon by occult means. Mrs. Cantlon has pleaded guilty; Miss Phillimore has pleaded not guilty. I may say at once that I am of opinion that both defendants are guilty. On her own admission Mrs. Cantlon has surrendered herself to

an occult power; if this is so, she is responsible and must face the consequences should the law be broken. The law makes no provision for the appearance of a spirit either in the dock or in the witness-box.' The magistrate gave Mrs. Cantlon the benefit of the doubt that she did believe she was 'under the control of this defunct Indian chief, but I should strongly advise Mrs. Cantlon to get rid of a disembodied spirit who wants to know the time when the hour of lunch or tea approaches.'

Mr. Oulton said that he was 'willing to believe that the existence of this Alliance is due to an honest attempt to further knowledge and to benefit mankind, but the earnest searcher after truth must be amenable to the law, and must not break it. If he deems the law out of date and thinks it frustrates his efforts, his remedy is to alter and modernize the law. For the reasons I have given, and because I think that fortune-telling is an unusual incident and not an object of this Alliance, I will deal with this case as leniently as I can. The summonses in both cases will be dismissed under the Probation of Offenders Act, and the costs (£30) will be apportioned: £20 for Miss Phillimore, £10 for Mrs. Cantlon.'

This case<sup>1</sup> is of great importance and has become historical. It was the first time that the police had invaded a recognized spiritualist society, and it was also the last. The prosecution was so unusual that on August 1, 1928, Mr. Harry Day, M.P., in Parliament, asked the Home Secretary whether his attention had been drawn to it, and whether he would consider the appointment of a committee for the purpose of investigating the claims of spiritualism, apart from those of fortune-telling, with the object of legalizing investigation in psychical research and allied subjects. Sir William Joynson-Hicks, the Home Secretary, replied that he had noticed the case, but did not propose to inquire into the matter. He added, in reply to a further question, that he did not consider the Cantlon case would hinder the class of investigation referred to.

The Press comments on the case mostly favoured the

<sup>1</sup> For a very fair account of the proceedings, see *Light*, June 30 to August 18, 1928, inclusive.

defendants. The *Spectator*<sup>1</sup> remarked 'we cannot help feeling that the policewomen who were instructed to gather evidence for this prosecution could have spent their time very much better. . . . Surely the Home Office has better ways of spending time and money.' The *Saturday Review*<sup>2</sup> said: 'That the police, with so many graver issues, should waste time in luring fortune-tellers into an offence is preposterous.' The *Morning Post*<sup>3</sup> in a leading article, 'Is it a Test Case?' stated: 'The Alliance may preach false doctrine; but since the fires of Smithfield were extinguished that has ceased to be a crime.' Even the *Law Journal*<sup>4</sup> was able to say: 'Of all forms of prosecution which obsolete laws compel the police to institute, prosecutions for fortune-telling are perhaps the most absurd. . . . And as for fortune-telling itself, the days when the public required protection against witchcraft and other forms of occult science are gone.'

Spiritualists, of course, rushed into print protesting against their mediums being prosecuted. In a letter to *The Times*<sup>5</sup> Sir A. Conan Doyle said: 'That the police should be employed upon such a matter is deplorable, especially as their activities take the hateful shape of *agents provocateurs*. . . . The Home Secretary has informed me officially that there is no hope of a change in the law. This is not a wise resolution. We are a solid body numbering some hundreds of thousands of voters.'

#### A MEDIUM STRIKES BACK

Another *cause célèbre* which made history was the action of Mrs. Louisa Anne Meurig Morris, a trance medium, who sued the *Daily Mail* for alleged libel. In January, 1931, Mrs. Morris began a series of Sunday evening services at the Fortune Theatre, London. Her trance addresses, purporting to be delivered through 'Power,' her 'spirit control,' attracted considerable attention. In reporting these addresses the *Daily Mail* had issued a contents bill bearing the words: 'Trance Medium Found Out.' The alleged libel was in the

<sup>1</sup> July 28, 1928.

<sup>4</sup> July 28, 1928.

<sup>2</sup> July 28, 1928.

<sup>5</sup> July 26, 1928.

<sup>3</sup> July 25, 1928.

wording of this bill, and in an article recording the proceedings at the Fortune Theatre.

The *Daily Mail* pleaded justification and fair comment on a matter of public interest. Mr. Norman Birkett, K.C., appeared for the *Daily Mail*, and Sergeant Sullivan, K.C., represented Mrs. Morris. The case<sup>1</sup> was heard before the late Mr. Justice McCardie and lasted eleven days, from April 5 to April 19, 1932. Among the witnesses for the plaintiff were Sir Oliver Lodge and Lady Conan Doyle.

The Meurig Morris case was remarkable for three things: Mr. Justice McCardie's summing up; the medium's dramatic outburst on the last day of the trial; and the wording of the jury's verdict. The Judge ruled that the matters in question were of public importance on which a defence of fair comment could be based. He asked the jury to consider whether Mrs. Morris could in fact convey messages from the dead; whether she was a genuine medium; and whether she honestly believed that she could do what she claimed. If she were honest, she ought to be vindicated; if she were dishonest, she ought to be exposed.

During the Judge's summing-up, he happened to point to Mrs. Morris with outstretched hand, whereupon she slowly rose and, apparently in trance, said in the deep voice of 'Power': 'Hearken to my voice, Brother Judge.' Obviously astonished, Mr. Justice McCardie ordered her to be removed from the court. When she was approached the same deep voice said: 'Do not touch her till I have left the body.' Mrs. Morris was carried to an anteroom where she remained unconscious for two hours. The case was adjourned for fifteen minutes, when the Judge resumed. He said: 'I hope I have not upset the feelings of anyone unnecessarily, but as a judge I care not for all the incarnate or discarnate spirits in the world . . . though there may be ten thousand million discarnate spirits around us.'

The jury's verdict was: 'We find for the defendants on the plea of fair comment on a matter of public interest, but we do not consider that any allegations of fraud or dishonesty have been proved.' Whereupon the Judge ruled that there must be judgment for the *Daily Mail*. Mrs. Morris appealed

<sup>1</sup> See *The Times*, April 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19, 20, 1932.

and, after a hearing of four days, the judges (Scrutton, Lawrence and Greer) dismissed the appeal. The case was taken to the House of Lords, where the appeal was again dismissed.

The lay Press and legal journals gave great prominence to the case. The *Law Journal*<sup>1</sup> regarded it as 'a notable event, and, quite irrespective of the verdict, marked a tremendous advance, not only in spiritualism, but in toleration. . . . Another curious fact appearing from the trial and in the course of it is that the jury might be expected to find that a "discarnate spirit" might transmit messages through a medium.' In the following issue of the *Law Journal*,<sup>2</sup> in an article 'Evidence and Psychic Phenomena,' it is stated that the jury's findings in the Morris case were being hotly discussed in legal circles as to whether the verdict was legally sound. The article, which is entirely sympathetic to Mrs. Morris, emphasizes 'the astonishing interruption of the summing-up.' The journal continues: 'We find it frankly incredible that any litigant, if conscious, would have the effrontery to attempt a "stunt" of that sort at such a moment. Apart from the gross contempt of court which would be involved, it would be such singularly bad tactics. As it was, who can say what influence it had in persuading the jury to a verdict, which, whether technically correct or not, most people will probably think achieved substantial justice?'

#### A TRAGIC MEDIUM

By far the strangest and most tragic adventures of a medium were those of Ingeborg Köber, the married daughter of Judge Ludvig Dahl. I am peculiarly interested in this case as I was the Judge's guest in 1927 at his beautiful home in Fredrikstad, a busy seaport fifty-eight miles from Oslo, during my second Scandinavian lecture tour.

Ludvig Dahl was not only the local judge, but was also the mayor of the neighbouring island of Hankö, the most fashionable Norwegian seaside resort. My visit to Fredrikstad was the result of an invitation to sit with the Judge's

<sup>1</sup> April 23, 1932.

<sup>2</sup> April 30, 1932.

daughter Ingeborg who, I was told, had developed mediumship since the death of her two brothers, Ludvig and Ragnar.

After the longest and most sumptuous dinner (which lasted nearly four hours) I have ever sat through, we adjourned to the drawing-room for the séance. In full light, we sat round a largish table and Ingeborg rapidly became entranced. The two brothers then 'came through' and I took copious notes of all that was said. The séance was not particularly convincing, but I was struck by the way Judge Dahl and his wife 'conversed' with their two sons, who spoke through the lips of the entranced Ingeborg. The Judge was particularly affected. I left Judge Dahl's hospitable roof with the feeling that I had spent a most interesting day in the bosom of a very charming, affectionate and united family. Later, Judge Dahl wrote an account of his daughter's mediumship, a book<sup>1</sup> for which I was instrumental in finding a London publisher, and for which Sir Oliver Lodge wrote a Foreword.

Judge Dahl died on August 8, 1934. He and Ingeborg were spending a day on the seashore. As the daughter was sun-bathing on the beach, her father, who was swimming close by, suddenly called out that he had cramp. Ingeborg plunged in the water, rescued her father, who was by then unconscious, and applied artificial respiration. She was unsuccessful and the Judge died—on the exact spot where his son Ludvig had met with a fatal bathing accident fifteen years previously.

Ingeborg ran for assistance and met a friend, another medium named Mrs. Stolt-Nielsen, who telephoned to Mrs. Dahl. The usual inquiry was held and it was then found that the finances of Hankö were in a chaotic condition, and that a large sum of money was missing from the town treasury. It was also discovered that the Judge's life insurance policy expired on the very day he was drowned.

During the inquiry it transpired that Mrs. Stolt-Nielsen was in possession of an envelope containing a 'message,' obtained at a séance during which her dead daughter spoke. The 'message,' apparently, was given to the daughter by the spirit of Dahl's son, Ragnar. This 'message' was to the effect that '*Judge Dahl will die through an accident in August,*

<sup>1</sup> *We are Here. Psychic Experiences*, by Ludvig Dahl, London, 1931.

1934.' The Judge was present at this séance, and of course knew of the prognostication.

After this revelation, all the parties concerned were once more interrogated by the authorities. Mrs. Dahl committed suicide. The Government then instituted a full investigation into all the facts and Ingeborg was haled before Judge Trampe Broch at Oslo. The questions before the court were: Was Judge Dahl murdered? Did he commit suicide on the last day that his life insurance was valid, knowing his financial position was desperate? Did anyone 'will' him to commit suicide, by suggestion? Did his knowledge of the fatal message have an auto-hypnotic effect upon him, causing him to kill himself? Was the death really an accident, the 'message' being merely a coincidence?

After an investigation which lasted, on and off, for more than three years, it was finally decided officially (December, 1937) that Judge Dahl's death was an accident. The jury could return no other verdict on the facts. And my contact with the Dahl family convinces me that the whole inquiry was preposterous, though the 'spirits' did a great disservice to Ingeborg on this occasion. But there was a 'happy ending,' as I understand that she married her chief counsel, Axel Segelcke, after the trial. Norwegian spiritualists are still discussing whether the spirits really predicted Judge Dahl's death, or whether the whole affair was one extraordinary coincidence after another.

Apropos of foretelling the future, Sir Oliver Lodge once pointed out in *The Times*<sup>1</sup> that the extent to which forecasting of the future can be achieved is a matter for scientific inquiry. All sorts of people 'predict': the time-table maker predicts the trains for months ahead; an astronomer can predict eclipses several centuries in advance, and so on. 'So some power of prediction is known to exist.' Sir Oliver concludes: 'How far foretelling of the future is possible is not a legal but a scientific question.'

Whether one agrees with Sir Oliver or not, it is obvious from the Acts which I have cited in this chapter that the law governing mediumship is anomalous and ridiculous, and the sooner it is altered the better. It is an anachronism that the

<sup>1</sup> October 27, 1925.



Witchcraft Act of 1735 and the Vagrancy Act of 1824 should remain on the Statute Book. The late Mr. E. P. Hewitt, K.C., a distinguished lawyer and spiritualist, made several attempts at rousing public opinion in favour of regularizing mediumship, but failed to enlist the support of either Parliament or Press. He wrote extensively on the subject.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See his 'Spiritualists and the Law,' in the *National Review* for September, 1923; and 'Fortune-Tellers and the Law,' in the *Daily Mail*, October 17, 1925. See also the following papers by Blewett Lee: 'The Conjuror' [re Witchcraft], *Virginia Law Review*, Charlottesville, February, 1921, pp. 370-7; 'The Fortune Teller,' *Virginia Law Review*, Charlottesville, February, 1923, pp. 249-266; 'Psychic Phenomena and the Law,' *Harvard Law Review*, Cambridge, Mass. 1921, pp. 625-38; 'Spiritualism and Crime,' *Columbia Law Review*, Cooperstown, May, 1922, pp. 439-49; 'A Trance in Court' [re Meurig Morris], *American Bar Association Journal*, Vol. XVIII, 1932, pp. 452-3.

## CHAPTER XIII

### SCIENTIFIC METHOD IN PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

HAVING become acquainted with some of the tricks of fraudulent mediums, and the laws under which the culprits are occasionally punished, it now remains for me to describe to the reader the scientific methods employed to (a) combat the machinations of the 'psychic' faker; and (b) to detail the apparatus used in those experiments capable of being recorded by instrumental means. The fact that our five normal senses are anything but infallible makes this imperative. In addition, as many séances are held in complete darkness, or in a very dim light, with the limbs of the sitters immobilized, and their ears deafened with hymn-singing or other 'music,' some of our senses—e.g. those of sight, hearing and touch—can hardly be used at all. Instruments are therefore necessary.

As long ago as 1871 Sir William Crookes was applying scientific methods to the investigation of the phenomena of D. D. Home and, a year or so later, to Florrie Cook. These have been fully recorded.<sup>1</sup> It can be stated that it was Crookes who first demonstrated the need for a scientific technique when dealing with the physical phenomena of the séance-room.

Most serious investigators since Crookes's classical experiments have adopted and sometimes improved the great physicist's methods. The genius of the twentieth century was undoubtedly Fritz Grunewald, a Berlin engineer, who devoted his life<sup>2</sup> to devising instruments of precision<sup>3</sup> for recording or demonstrating psychic phenomena. His laboratory in the Spandauerstrasse, Charlottenburg, Berlin,

<sup>1</sup> See *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism*, by Sir William Crookes, London, 1874.

<sup>2</sup> He died July 21, 1925.

<sup>3</sup> Described in his *Physikalisch-mediumistische Untersuchungen*. ('Die Okkulte Welt,' Nos. 13-16), Pfullingen-i.-Württemberg, 1920.

was a veritable museum. It was he who built and installed the wonderful electric balance in the Institut Métapsychique, Paris. It is claimed for many physical mediums (e.g. Kathleen Goligher) that they *lose weight* during trance or in the production of phenomena. For instance, when 'ectoplasm' is exuded, the medium is supposed to lose weight to the exact amount of whatever is exuded, and/or to the *force exerted* by that ectoplasm. This has never been demonstrated scientifically, but Grunewald's ingenious balance would prove if this were so. The medium can be comfortably immobilized in the balance, which automatically records on a graph his or her weight. The slightest change in density would be instantly detected. But this apparatus is very complicated, and in any case, mediums fight shy of it, as they do of all instruments.

#### CINEMATOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

The ideal way of recording evidence—either of fraud or paranormality—at a séance is by photography, especially cinematography. What I have been aiming at for years is to produce an infra-red cinematographic film which, when used in conjunction with infra-red filters and a large aperture lens, would produce a fully-exposed film in *complete darkness* of all that took place in the séance-room. This has not yet been achieved, though Messrs. Kodak have kindly offered to co-operate with me in producing this much-desired result. When we are able to take rapid photographs in complete darkness it will achieve two things: it will entirely eliminate the fraudulent physical medium (but not the fake 'spirit photographer'); and it will tell us if and when a genuine phenomenon occurs.

Though we are not yet able to produce a photograph in complete darkness (except with a fairly long exposure), we can get a good instantaneous picture in a dull light, using infra-red rays and films. But unfortunately, the type of medium (and phenomena) we wish to photograph, will not function in a 'dull light.' 'The darker the séance-room, the better the phenomena' is an axiom well understood by

scientific investigators. And if the light is so poor that we cannot see the medium, then the value of the phenomena is generally *nil*. And if the light of the séance-room is so good that we can take pictures by it, then we do not require a camera as we can use our eyes.

In the old National Laboratory of Psychical Research,<sup>1</sup> the first fully-equipped psychic laboratory in any country, a comprehensive cinematographic equipment was available, including standard and sub-standard instruments. The method we employed for photographing mediums in the 'dark' was as follows: a temporary matchboard division screened off about a third of the séance-room. The larger portion of the room was flooded with infra-red light, the rays passing through deep infra-red filters. Through a hole in the matchboarding the wide-angle lens of a ciné-camera was focussed on the cabinet in which the medium sat. Near the top of the cabinet was a microphone connected with an amplifier, earphones, and loud-speaker in an adjoining room. The remote controls of the ciné-camera and séance lights were also in this room.

The medium, comfortably seated in the cabinet, gave us the cue when to turn out the séance-room lights. This having been done, we waited, earphones in position, for signs of the beginning of trance—genuine or simulated—transmitted by the microphone. Then we flooded the room with infra-red rays and started the motor of the ciné-camera. What then happened was recorded on a dictaphone. The above experiments were perfectly successful, up to a point. We found that, although the medium, if he left his chair, could wander about the portion of the room screened off, he was usually in the field of the camera lens, which he could not touch, owing to a thick glass Hilger 'optical flat' intervening between the lens and hole in the matchboarding. This particular medium writhed and bellowed, and twisted and twirled in his chair. But he produced no phenomena. He said there was too much light. When we reduced the illumination by using deeper filters, we had to slow down the ciné shutter in order to get a proper exposure. But as this man was usually in rather violent action, the shutter was

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix B.

too slow for his movements and all we got was a blur. Some day a super-speedy infra-red film will be produced which will solve our difficulties. I would give nearly all I possess to get a well-exposed ciné film of a *genuine* materialization, from start to finish. What a lot we could learn from, for example, a film of all that took place during the 'Rosalie' séance!<sup>1</sup> The one drawback of using the ciné-camera for continuous séance-room work is the expense. Using sub-standard 16 mm. film, we found that the cost during exposure was more than six shillings per minute.

#### CINEMATOGRAPHY IN THE FIELD

For 'psychic' field work, the ciné-camera is supreme. Our slow-motion films of the fire-walking experiments<sup>2</sup> enabled us to acquire data as to the method of 'walking,' and to make comparisons between, and analyse the movements of the walkers, which would have been quite impossible with 'still' photography. In the same way, we were able to record the Indian Rope Trick<sup>3</sup> as performed by Karachi.

The ciné-camera was the means of determining a dispute concerning the experimental interment of Rahmen Bey, an Egyptian fakir. On July 15, 1938, we attempted an experiment at Carshalton during which Rahmen, at his own request, was to have been buried alive for one hour in a 'grave' six feet deep. Rahmen went into his usual trance, and was lowered into the pit. After about two feet of earth had been shovelled on to him, the alarm bell rang, warning us that Rahmen was in distress. The fakir was buried with the bell switch in his hand, and he had been interred for exactly four and a half minutes. Frantic efforts were made to get the man out of the pit and this was done very quickly. The medical men present said he was little the worse for his adventure. Rahmen stated that his cataleptic state was incomplete because, in lowering him into the grave, his arms caught the side and one of his hands was jerked from his

<sup>1</sup> See Chap. VIII.

<sup>2</sup> See Chap. XIV.

<sup>3</sup> For account, see Price's *Confessions of a Ghost-Hunter*, pp. 344-54.

forehead—a position necessary for complete trance. Many of those present were not convinced that his hand had been moved, but my slow-motion film of the experiment confirms Rahmen's statement.

#### THE CAMERA AS DETECTIVE

The camera has been used for séance recording for many years. In 1874 Sir William Crookes took a series of photographs of the beautiful spirit daughter of 'John King,' the pirate chief.<sup>1</sup> These pictures (see Frontispiece) of 'Katie King' are indistinguishable from portraits of living girls. But Sir William believed in them, and carried this belief to his grave.<sup>2</sup> One of his tests with Florrie Cook, the medium through whom 'Katie' appeared, was the placing of the medium in an electrical circuit, broken by a galvanometer. The slightest movement of the medium, it was claimed, would have been recorded. But 'Katie' appeared as usual with no deflections of the galvanometer needle.

It is not usually lovely ladies who are photographed at materialization séances, but strips of cheese cloth, chunks of cotton wool, and odd and displaced articles of white under-clothing. As in the case of Mrs. Duncan's 'spirits,' the texture of the material is usually quite apparent.

It was the automatic camera coupled to the Vaku-Blitz flash bulbs which proved that Rudi Schneider was able to evade control at our experiments;<sup>3</sup> and it was a flashlight photograph which revealed the fact that the 'telekinetic' movements supposed to occur through Stanislaw P. were produced normally by the medium.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism*.

<sup>2</sup> In a letter to *Light* for December 9, 1916, Sir William says 'I adhere to my published statements and have nothing to retract.' He states that 'survival,' under certain circumstances, has been demonstrated.

<sup>3</sup> See Chap. V.

<sup>4</sup> See *Revue Métapsychique*, Paris, November–December, 1930.

## CONTROLLING THE MEDIUM

Because ninety-nine out of one hundred physical mediums cheat if they get the slightest opportunity, they have to be 'controlled'—that is, so held or guarded that they cannot cheat. They have to be prevented from doing normally what they claim to accomplish paranormally. This is done in a variety of ways.

The old method of control was a tactual one: the sitters joined hands in chain formation and the medium was held—or supposed to be held—by the end sitter or sitters. But experience has proved that this method cannot be depended upon. Either confederates in the circle help the 'phenomena' or the medium plays the time-honoured trick of mixing up his ten fingers with those of his controllers so that the latter are finally both holding the same hand of the medium (when they ought to be holding separate hands), who is thus able to free one hand for the production of 'manifestations.'

## THE ELECTRICAL CONTROL

In 1923 I devised an 'electric chair', which Schrenck and I finally developed into the electrical control which is described in the chapter on the Schneider boys. I believe that this is the most satisfactory control of a medium ever invented. But it has the disadvantage of preventing those in charge of the séance from employing instruments and other apparatus, as their hands likewise are immobilized. But this difficulty could be overcome.

I have also mentioned in Chapter V that after Rudi Schneider left us he was investigated in Paris by Dr. Osty, who used the infra-red ray method of controlling objects to be operated upon (for telekinesis). This infra-red system has been simplified and improved by Mr. J. Rigby, of Scarborough, who kindly sent me particulars and drawings of his invention, which is peculiarly suitable for testing materialization mediums.

The walls and ceiling of an ordinary séance-room are studded with small infra-red ray projectors, exactly opposite each of which is a corresponding photo-electric cell. The medium would be placed in a chair in some part of the room, thus cutting out certain of the rays. This would be noted in a remote place away from the séance-room. If the medium remained in his chair, all well and good. But if he began to wander about, this would be noticed in the control room, where all his movements would be recorded by indicators operated by the photo-electric cells, which would register the smallest action by the medium. If a 'materialization' appeared (as is so often claimed) it, too, would be registered in the control room, and a press of a button would automatically photograph it. This system has the advantage of leaving the medium to himself in an absolutely dark room, without any form of physical control of his person. These conditions are *better* than those usually demanded by materialization mediums.

#### THE MECHANICAL DOLL

The most elaborate and ingenious control of a medium ever devised is the invention of Karl Kraus ('Karl Weber') of Vienna, a 'medium' who himself was exposed by Professor Thirring,<sup>1</sup> and whose *Confessions* I purchased some years ago, together with the drawings of his electro-mechanical device for controlling a medium producing telekinetic phenomena.

Briefly, the medium sits in complete darkness, quite uncontrolled physically, but 'guarded' by a number of infra-red rays. The photo-electric cells are so arranged, electrically and mechanically, that *all movements of the medium* are transmitted to the well-lit control room, where they are reproduced in an articulated doll or figure placed in front of the observers. If the medium moves his arm, the puppet's arm also moves, and so on. In addition, every movement of the medium is registered on a graph, on which the time is also recorded.

<sup>1</sup>'Psychical Research in Vienna,' *Journal*, Am. S.P.R., December, 1925, pp. 690-707.



On a table in front of the medium is the object to be moved paranormally. Every movement of this object is also recorded on a graph, and by a similar duplicate object placed in front of the puppet. If the test object is moved it is automatically photographed. By comparing the two graphs, and checking up by the movements of the doll, it is claimed that the abnormality or otherwise of the telekinesis could be determined. But the whole set-up is very complicated, though I think it could be made to work. In addition to the infra-red rays described above, I have used ultra-violet rays in the séance-room for photographing articles thought to have been surreptitiously handled by mediums under test for telekinetic phenomena. The ultra-violet rays will reveal finger-prints where ordinary photography will not.

#### MEDIUMS IN CAGES

Except in a psychic laboratory, it is not often that electrical controls are available. Investigators have to resort to other methods, one of which is putting the medium in a cage. This is not so terrible as it sounds, and it is seldom effective. Or the objects to be operated upon can be put in a cage, and we devised a double cage-table for our experiments with Stella C.

Quite a number of 'phenomena' can be produced by a fraudulent medium, even in a cage. 'Psychic lights,' materializations, and other 'effects' can be simulated, according to *what the medium is permitted to take into the cage with him*. This depends on the 'fore-control,' which I will mention later. Professor Thirring, during his experiments with Kraus, used two cages: the medium was controlled in one, the objects to be moved were in another. But that did not prevent Kraus moving the objects normally, as Thirring has explained in the article cited.

Willi Schneider frequently sat in a cage and in my first experiments with him at Munich a large and heavy musical box which we had placed in a gauze cage was successfully operated, the boy sitting *outside* the cage held by two controllers. But this was a genuine phenomenon. A famous

'cage medium' was Francesco Carancini, often suspected of fraud.<sup>1</sup>

As an alternative to cages, mediums have been sewn up in bags, handcuffed, nailed down in boxes, trussed up like a roast fowl, and placed in one-piece tights, the openings of which were afterwards sewn together with multi-coloured silks forming a prescribed, intricate pattern. All these safeguards have *not* prevented the fakers from producing 'effects' of some sort. Some physical mediums insist upon being roped to a chair. This is quite useless, as rope tricks are numerous and it is impossible to tie up a medium satisfactorily with *one* piece of rope. If a medium wishes to be tied up, use many pieces of floss silk with which to secure him to his chair. He may be able to get *out* of his ties, but will not be able to get back into them.

Some mediums dislike being held, so it is permissible to control their hands only. With Erto, the 'luminous medium,' we completely stopped his 'psychic lights' (known to be produced by bits of ferro-cerium, i.e. the 'flint' of the cigar-lighter) by placing each hand in a stout oak box, with apertures tightly fitting the wrists, afterwards screwing on the lids. The boxing gloves we previously used were simply torn to ribbons in the paroxysms of the trance—real or simulated.<sup>2</sup> Speaking of psychic lights produced at séances, the spectroscope has been used in an endeavour to analyse them, but as they invariably appear spontaneously and seldom twice in the same place, their analysis has been almost impossible.

#### CONTROLLING THE 'DIRECT VOICE'

Voice mediums are very difficult to investigate. They always sit in Stygian darkness and seldom allow any sort of control. As a 'direct voice' is supposed to be a spirit voice coming out of the ether, and not dependent upon the vocal organs of the medium, it is important that some precautions should be taken to prevent the medium using his own voice. But very few mediums will permit this. Dr. Mark Richard-

<sup>1</sup> See *Le Secret de la Cage spirite*, by André Durville, Paris [1918].

<sup>2</sup> For details, see *Leaves from a Psychist's Case-Book* (Price), pp. 354-76.

son, friend of 'Margery,' the versatile American medium, constructed a device which was intended to prove that the spirit, 'Walter's' voice, which is heard at Margery's séances, was indeed what it purported to be, and did not emanate from the medium's own vocal organs.

Dr. Richardson's apparatus<sup>1</sup> consists of a tall glass U-tube, from one end of which an armoured rubber tube connects with a short glass tube stuck in the rubber bung of an empty bottle. In the bung of the bottle is another tube, at the extremity of which is a glass mouthpiece, alleged to be fraud-proof. In this mouthpiece are three small holes which, in use, have to be sealed by the lips and tongue respectively of the medium.

If the U-tube is partly filled with water, and the person being tested blows through the mouthpiece, the water is driven down one arm of the U-tube and up the other. When the medium ceases to blow, the air rushes in, and the water in the U-tube again finds its level. Of course, the apparatus is used in complete darkness, and luminous cork floats indicate the level of the water.

In my opinion, there are two defects in this apparatus: the armoured rubber tube and the mouthpiece. The tubes should be of metal, which would prevent any manipulation of them; and the holes in the mouthpiece could be sealed by a piece of chewing-gum secreted in the mouth. A person could make the water rise in the U-tube, seal the holes in the mouthpiece in the way I have suggested, and use his own voice for simulating spirit voices.

As 'Margery' was reported to be coming to London, I set about devising an instrument which, I was sure, could *not* be fraudulently manipulated in any way. The result was my apparatus, partly electrical and partly mechanical. The act of blowing down a rigid metal tube, to which is attached a really fraudproof mouthpiece, does two things: A red electric pea-light is switched off ('blown' out), and the air pressure applied to the mouthpiece is recorded by a pen on a revolving clockwork drum. With mouth immobilized by the instrument, it is utterly impossible even to begin to say something

<sup>1</sup> For full particulars and illustrations, see 'Dr. Richardson's Voice-Control Machine,' by J. Malcolm Bird, *Journal, Am. S.P.R.*, December, 1925.

without the tell-tale light glowing and the recording pen marking a dip in the graph.

Dr. Crandon, 'Margery's' husband, examined my Voice Control Recorder, and told me he could not permit his wife to use it. Afterwards I offered £50 to any person who could say, 'God save the King!' in complete darkness when controlled by the instrument. Several people tried, including Munnings, the medium, and no one succeeded in beating the machine.

#### TESTING HUMAN EMANATIONS

A number of special instruments have been devised for testing alleged emanations and radiations from mediums and others. Dr. Sydney Alritz invented a machine<sup>1</sup> for registering will-power; the Abbé Fortin's 'Magnetometer' was supposed to register electric emanations; Dr. Paul Joire invented a machine called the 'Sthenometer' for registering externalized nervous energy; and much apparatus has been designed by dowzers for recording the alleged radiations from underground water seams and metallic lodes.

Crawford invented a new technique for demonstrating his theory that 'ectoplasmic rods,' after leaving the medium, raised objects by the cantilever system,<sup>2</sup> but this has never been confirmed.

Numerous instruments have been made in the hope that they would displace the human medium in contacting the spirits. Sir William Barrett has suggested the word 'Autoscope,' for such an instrument, one of which, the 'Dynamistograph,' was made by two Dutchmen. And Abrams's electronic machines for diagnosing our various ills are still with us.

#### TESTING SPIRIT WRITING

Some mediums specialize in producing 'spirit writing,' on slates or paper. A few years ago such people were common,

<sup>1</sup> Illustrated opp. p. 120 of *The Story of Psychic Science*, by Hereward Carrington, London, 1930.

<sup>2</sup> See the list of Crawford's publications in Appendix D.

but they are not very fashionable to-day. However, one does occasionally come across writing alleged to have been produced paranormally, and then it has to be tested, especially if it is thought that the medium in question has escaped control. A handwriting expert should be consulted, in order that the medium's own writing can be compared with that alleged to be produced by spirits. Wilhelm Langenbruch has evolved a graphometric system for the identification of personality by handwriting, which should yield good results in the séance-room. It is claimed that certain space proportions exist in the handwriting of every person. These space proportions are said to express a constant personal rhythm of each individual and to offer a mathematically exact basis for identification. The system can be applied to spirit drawings, paintings, 'scotographs,' etc., in addition to handwriting.<sup>1</sup>

#### THE FORE-CONTROL OF A MEDIUM

Many of the instrumental safeguards recorded above can be discarded if a proper *fore-control* of the medium is carried out; better still, if he will consent to work in a white light. All 'apport,' materialization, and telekinetic mediums should be subjected to a rigorous medical inspection before any scientific examination of their claims. Small articles will produce big effects in complete darkness, if they can be secreted in or upon the person of a medium and allowed in the séance-room. Every body orifice should be explored by a medical man. This may sound outrageous until I mention that when searching mediums the most extraordinary phenomena-producing articles have frequently been discovered in places not usually referred to in polite society. After the medical inspection, a medium should be controlled by being asked to don one-piece tights, sewn on him, or by other means suggested in this chapter.

<sup>1</sup> The possibilities of this system are discussed by Dr. Alfred Gradenwitz in the *Psychische Studien* (Leipzig) for June, 1925.

## TESTING MENTAL PHENOMENA

It is obviously much more difficult to test a mental or trance medium than a physical one. It is what a mental medium *says*, rather than what he *does*, that is important. But certain physiological and other changes are supposed to occur in some trance mediums and these can be tested. For example, the heart, pulse, blood pressure, and respiration rates can all be tested (by means of the sphygmomanometer, the kymograph, etc.) during trance, and compared with graphs representing the normal condition of the medium. In the chapter on 'Extra-Sensory Perception,' we have seen how Mrs. A. Peel Goldney carried out an investigation<sup>1</sup> into the alleged physiological changes said to occur with Mrs. Eileen Garrett. Blood counts, coagulation times, respiration, etc., were all investigated. In addition, thermal changes, both of the entranced medium and his or her vicinity, can be measured and compared with graphs taken in the normal state.

## QUANTITATIVE STUDY OF TRANCE PERSONALITIES

Professor Stanley Hall and Dr. Amy Tanner invented what has been called a 'word-association test' and applied this technique to the 'controls' of Mrs. Piper. Certain questions or words are asked the medium, and the *reaction times* before answering are noted. The same questions are asked of the 'spirit controls,' and *their* reaction times are also recorded. By this means it is ascertained whether the mind—conscious or subconscious—of the medium, and that of the control, are one and the same. If the reaction times are identical for the same question or word, then we are dealing with the same mind. If the times vary, then it is possible that we are dealing with a distinct personality—perhaps a spirit.

It was Mr. Whately Carington who first suggested using a quantitative technique in conjunction with the use of the psycho-galvanic reflex and reaction times. Dr. Hereward Carrington applied this technique to Mrs. Garrett and her

<sup>1</sup> *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. XLV, pp. 43-68.

control 'Uvani,' with striking results<sup>1</sup> which, however, have been criticized. Whately Carington developed a much better technique based on Dr. R. A. Fisher's 'Analysis of Variance.' The method of reaction times was found to be much more reliable than with the use of the psycho-galvanic reflex. Many of Whately Carington's conclusions were shown by Professor R. H. Thouless to be without foundation, but it may be fairly said that he has established several important results with some certainty. He has shown, for instance, that when a series of words is called over to Mrs. Osborne Leonard in the normal state, and then to 'Fedá,' her alleged spirit control, those words which give short reaction times with Mrs. Leonard evoke exceptionally long times when given to 'Fedá.' This suggests that 'Fedá' is not a spirit distinct from the medium, but a secondary personality built up from material that has been repressed from Mrs. Leonard's normal waking life. Professor Thouless thinks that W. Carington has failed to establish the existence of real spirits which can communicate through one medium, and sometimes through another. This is a serious setback for the spiritualistic hypothesis.<sup>2</sup>

Speaking of the galvanometer, this has also been applied to mediums for testing the psycho-galvanic reflexes, induced by varying emotions.

#### CONTROLLING SEALED BILLET READING

A phenomenon claimed for some mental mediums is that of reading the unknown contents of a sealed letter or becoming psychically cognizant of what is hidden in a sealed package. To control such mediums it is necessary to place the test message in a nest of opaque envelopes, each of which is sealed. Round every envelope, beginning with the smallest, a strip of lead foil should be placed, and the ends sealed, choosing a different position for each envelope. When the

<sup>1</sup> See his *History of the A.P.I. An Instrumental Test of the Independence of a 'Spirit Control'*, New York [1932].

<sup>2</sup> References: 'The Quantitative Study of Trance Personalities,' by W. Whately Carington, *Proc.*, S.P.R., Parts 136, 141, 149. For review and criticisms of Carington's work, by R. H. Thouless, see *Proc.*, S.P.R., Part 150.

package is completed, it should be sewn criss-cross with coloured threads, the ends of which must be sealed with wax on the back. The package or envelope *must then be X-rayed*. The lead-foil bands will form an intricate pattern on the negative, which must be carefully preserved. After the medium has returned the packet (the 'clairvoyance' is often done away from the séance-room) it should be X-rayed again, and the two negatives superimposed. The slightest tampering with the envelopes will be revealed by the two X-ray patterns not exactly registering. The same technique can be employed where packets containing solid articles are concerned. The objects must be firmly packed in a box, and well-wrapped and sealed. It was by means of X-raying a secret pattern on my plates that I exposed William Hope, the spirit photographer.<sup>1</sup>

I have omitted to mention the numerous machines (such as F. R. Melton's 'psychic telephone')<sup>2</sup> invented by mediums as a short cut to contacting with the spirit world. Some of these are ingenious, but I have never yet seen one which would operate unless the uncontrolled medium was near it. And a test like this is useless. The most amazing instrument was the 'Mars machine' described in a previous book of mine.<sup>3</sup>

It must be borne in mind that in addition to the special instruments which I have mentioned in this chapter, the ordinary apparatus to be found in every chemical, physical, and psychological laboratory is extensively used in the scientific testing of mediums. And in the laboratory of the Psychologisches Institut of the University of Bonn is a large and apparently quite innocent mirror. But the 'mirror' is in reality a window, lightly silvered on one surface. When the lights are on in the laboratory, observers in an adjoining room can plainly see all that is taking place in the laboratory, though those in the latter room cannot see the observers, I hope no German medium reads this! But the idea is so ingenious that a brief description of the arrangement cannot be omitted from any chapter dealing with scientific method in psychical research.

<sup>1</sup> *Journal*, S.P.R., May, 1922.

<sup>2</sup> *A Psychic Telephone*, by F. R. Melton, Nottingham, 1921.

<sup>3</sup> *Confessions of a Ghost-Hunter*, pp. 118-22.



## CHAPTER XIV

### SCIENCE SOLVES THE FIRE-WALK MYSTERY

**A**LTHOUGH at first sight it might appear that fire-walking has little to do with psychical research, as a matter of fact the subject has interested psychists for very many years, and especially during the last half-century. The reason for this is that the secret of immunity from burning, clearly demonstrated with many professional fire-walkers, was thought to be due to causes which can be described as 'mental.' And that this theory is a very ancient one is proved by the fact that Virgil<sup>1</sup> suggests in Arruns's prayer to Apollo that 'faith' is the cause of the devotee's immunity.

Though fire-walking has always puzzled psychical researchers, it is curious that no attempt was made to solve the mystery until I decided, in 1934, to test such professional 'walkers' as were willing to be examined scientifically. To this end, I inserted an advertisement in *The Times*<sup>2</sup> asking that professional and amateur fire-walkers and fire-resisters should communicate with me. I did not get a single reply. Nearly twelve months later, by the merest accident, I learnt that a young Kashmiri named Kuda Bux, who was demonstrating his trick blindfold-reading in a London cabaret had walked on fire in India on many occasions and was willing to be tested.

#### KUDA BUX

The experiments with Kuda Bux were held under the auspices of the University of London Council for Psychical Investigation and proved very interesting and instructive. The tests were carried out on September 9 and 17, 1935, in some private grounds at Carshalton, Surrey. The fire

<sup>1</sup> *Æneid* XI, 787, 788.

<sup>2</sup> For October 23, 1934.

trenches were made to Bux's specifications, and at the final demonstration the one walked on measured eleven feet long, six feet wide, and nine inches deep. To make the fire (which was ignited at 8.20 a.m.) some seven tons of oak logs, one ton of fire-wood, a load of charcoal, ten gallons of paraffin and fifty copies of *The Times* were used. The fire was ready for walking on by three o'clock. The temperatures were then measured and it was found that the heat of the surface was 430° Centigrade, and the interior, 1400° Centigrade. Bux walked barefooted over the fire twice, each time in four strides, and at both attempts each foot was in contact with the embers twice. He was quite unharmed. Some amateurs who attempted to duplicate the feat were burned, but not severely. Our experiments established the fact that a man weighing 120 pounds, with chemically unprepared feet, can take four rapid steps on charcoal at 430° Centigrade without injury to his feet, the average time of contact for each step being approximately half a second. It was not clear why the amateurs were burnt, but as they all appeared rather nervous and floundered somewhat, this was thought to be the reason. But it was obvious that we had not discovered the secret of fire-walking, and further experiments were desirable.<sup>1</sup>

Though we did not solve the problem of fire-walking, we cleared the ground a little regarding rival theories as to how it was done. We proved that no preparation of the feet was necessary; that the callosity of the skin had nothing to do with immunity, because the soles of Kuda Bux's feet were soft, while those of one of the amateurs (Mr. Digby Moy-nagh) were hard; that fasting or other initial preparation was not necessary; that the feet did not have to be wet or damp—a condition which is actually disadvantageous, because cinders are liable to stick to the soles. We also found that fire-walking was in no sense a *trick*. We were left with three alternatives as to how the feat might have been accomplished: (a) that it was done by 'faith'; (b) that the short average time of contact with the embers was responsible

<sup>1</sup> For the official account of the 1935 experiments, see 'A Report on Two Experimental Fire-Walks,' by Harry Price, *Bulletin* II, Univ. of London Council for Psychical Investigation, London, 1936. (20 illustrations.)

for the absence of burning; (c) that there was a knack in walking.

#### AHMED HUSSAIN

Accounts of our experiments were published in practically every principal newspaper in the world, and, in India particularly, Kuda Bux was hailed as something of a hero. The publicity he received inspired another Indian professional fire-walker, Ahmed Hussain, to offer us his services, and he came to England to be tested in the early part of 1937. Through his agent, I offered him a £50 fee. He wanted £100, which I said I would pay him if he successfully passed our tests.

Ahmed Hussain is a Moslem from Cawnpore, was aged twenty-three, and weighed 126 pounds. Like Kuda Bux, he is a 'magician' by profession, and has walked on fire in India on many occasions. Also like Kuda Bux, he claimed to impart his alleged immunity from burning to others.

For the second series of tests which I organized for the University Council, I again chose the grounds of Mr. Alex. L. Dribbell's house at Carshalton. I advertised in *The Times*<sup>1</sup> for volunteer 'walkers' to be used as controls, and received more than forty replies, including one from a girl undergraduate of a provincial university.

Our first test was held on April 7, 1937, Hussain stipulating that the trench should be about twelve feet long. The actual measurements were twelve feet six inches long, four feet wide, and fifteen inches deep. We used four tons of oak logs, one ton of firewood, five hundredweight of forest-burnt charcoal, ten gallons of paraffin, and fifty copies of *The Times*. The fire was laid in the ordinary way and ignited at seven o'clock on the morning of the test. The fire was reduced to small embers by 3 p.m. and temperatures were then measured.

<sup>1</sup> For March 3, 1937.

## MEASURING THE TEMPERATURES

The measuring of the temperatures at our experiments with Kuda Bux was not particularly satisfactory. The figures obtained were accurate, but the instruments employed were hurriedly constructed and difficult to use. For the tests with Hussain I decided to approach what are probably the greatest thermal experts in the world, the Cambridge Instrument Co., Ltd., and I take this opportunity of publicly thanking them for their skilful and sustained interest in our investigation. Their representative, Mr. H. G. Starling (who was responsible for all the measurements at the three tests) was particularly helpful. As it is very important to put on record a detailed description of the instruments used, I will now do so.

*Interior temperature.*—A 12-inch thermocouple, fitted with 'Titan' elements, was connected to a portable indicator (reading from 0–1200° Centigrade) fitted with automatic cold junction compensator and anti-parallax mirror to facilitate accurate readings.<sup>1</sup> The principle upon which this thermo-electric pyrometer operates is as follows: if two wires of dissimilar metals are joined together to form a closed circuit and one junction is heated, an electro-motive force is set up, causing an electric current to flow through the circuit. The junction exposed to the heat is termed the 'thermocouple.' It is connected to a galvanometer which is calibrated to read directly in degrees of temperature. The galvanometer is a strong pivoted coil instrument with pointer swinging above a calibrated scale. The thermocouple, which is protected by a steel sheath, was plunged into the glowing fire to a depth of about six inches, and the temperature at the end of the thermocouple was read off on the indicator.

*Surface temperature.*—The same portable indicator (as described above) was employed, but with a different type of thermocouple, designed to give quick and accurate readings of surface temperatures. In this thermocouple, the ends of the wires comprising the junction were flattened out to form

<sup>1</sup> Types of thermocouple and indicator are illustrated in Folder 50 (*Figs. 8 and C*), Cambridge Instrument Co., Ltd.

a thin narrow strip, which was held in contact with the surface of the fire, the temperature being read, as before, on the portable indicator.

*Measuring skin temperature.*—To measure the skin temperature of Hussain's feet, a special sensitive thermocouple was pressed into contact with the soles immediately prior to and after he had walked through the fire. This skin thermocouple was connected to a sensitive unipivot galvanometer.<sup>1</sup> By means of constants, determined previously, the readings of the galvanometer were readily translated into degrees of temperature. As the temperature of the feet was very near to that of the atmosphere, considerable errors in reading might have been introduced by fluctuation in atmospheric temperatures affecting the temperature of the 'cold junction' of the thermocouple. To avoid any possibility of such errors, the 'cold junction' was maintained at a constant temperature by immersion in a vacuum flask.

#### TEMPERATURES RECORDED

By the time that Hussain was ready to walk, the internal temperature of the fire measured 700° Centigrade, and the surface 575° Centigrade. Hussain's feet were examined by Professors C. A. Pannett and W. D. Newcomb, washed in cold water, dried, and temperature of soles measured. Professor Newcomb drew a pin across the soles of his feet, and there was no reaction. The 'reflex action' test was then made and proved normal. At 3.45 Hussain, attired in native dress, recited a prayer from the *Koran*, stepped into the fire and took three quick strides in 1.3 seconds—the right foot being in contact with the embers twice. He was immediately examined and found to be quite unburned. The temperature of the soles of his feet was 10° Fahrenheit lower than before the walk. The times were measured by Dr. Guy B. Brown, using stop-watches, including the latest model Frodsham split-second instrument, reading to 0.01 second.

<sup>1</sup> Illustrated in Supplement to List No. 160 (*Fig. 1, Type LX*), Cambridge Instrument Co., Ltd.

## 'IMMUNITY' NOT CONVEYED TO OTHERS

One of Hussain's claims was that his immunity from burning could be conveyed to others. To test this, I chose five amateurs who volunteered to walk the trench. They were:

John Craigie (143 pounds)  
N. W. Marshall (145 pounds)  
H. A. Bould (124 pounds)  
A. I. Chesney (177 pounds)  
Reginald Adcock (160 pounds)

They were medically examined by Professors Pannett and Newcomb, and their feet were tested for possible chemical preparations, washed, and dried. Temperatures of soles were then measured. The three amateurs first named then prepared to accompany Hussain over the fire. They lined up behind him, holding hands in chain formation, the foremost (Craigie) clutching the Indian's belt. Hussain instructed them how to walk. After more prayers, the Indian gave the signal to start and they crossed the trench in 1.5 seconds. (Plate IX.) Hussain failed to impart his 'immunity' from injury to the amateurs, who were all burned to a varying, but slight degree. Craigie complained of a little pain, as a cinder stuck to his foot.

Reginald Adcock then walked the trench alone, taking three steps in 1.4 seconds, followed by A. I. Chesney, who took four quick steps. Both were slightly burned, and in Adcock's case the foot that was in contact with the embers most often was the one most affected.

Our first experiments were most instructive. It was obvious that the effect of the heat on the feet of the walkers was cumulative, and two steps by each foot appeared to be the limit that could be taken without injury, even by the professional. To test this theory, we asked Hussain if he would walk on a trench twenty feet long. After some hesitation, he consented.

## SECOND TESTS

The next experiments were held at Carshalton on April 9, 1937, and the B.B.C. broadcast a running commentary of the proceedings. The trench was twenty feet long, five feet wide, and nine inches deep. We used the following material: ten tons of oak logs, one ton of firewood, five hundredweight of charcoal, ten gallons of paraffin, and fifty copies of *The Times*. The fire was ignited at 7 a.m. and was ready for walking on by 2.30 p.m. Professor W. D. Newcomb and Dr. Cridland were in charge of the medical arrangements, and Dr. Guy B. Brown was responsible for the instrumental records. As before, the feet of the walkers were medically examined, washed, tested, and temperatures measured.

## HUSSAIN IS BURNED

At the time of walking, the surface temperature of the fire was 740° Centigrade, and that of the interior 750° Centigrade. At 2.59 p.m. Hussain muttered the usual prayers and half a minute later stepped into the trench, taking six steps in 2.3 seconds. This produced six blisters on the left foot, and one blister and marked erythema on the right, injuries similar to those sustained by the amateurs after three or four steps. As we anticipated, the effect was cumulative in his case also. Hussain refused to walk a second time. His feet were photographed soon after the walk, and again on the following morning at St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington, under the supervision of Professor Newcomb, who made the following observations:

(1) There was no evidence that any preparation had been applied to Hussain's feet to render them less vulnerable to fire. They appeared the normal feet for an Indian and, as is usual with that race, are flat. The skin has a curious tough consistency rather like a kid glove. Several small scars were noticed on the inner sides and between the toes. These are consistent with previous burning.

(2) After the walks on April 7, he showed no signs of burning, while all the amateurs were burned.

(3) After the walk on April 9 (about thirty minutes after) there were three small blisters and two areas of erythema on the inner side of the sole of left foot in instep. An area of erythema was present on the upper part of the inner sole of right foot. All the amateurs who walked were burned more than Ahmed Hussain, and Mr. Bould was rather badly blistered. No blister was found on the heel or ball of the foot (i.e. the areas walked on and so hardened).

(4) On Saturday, April 10, six small blisters averaging 0.4 cm. diameter could be seen on inner side of Hussain's left foot, and the area of erythema on right foot was now a blister. All the blisters were surrounded by small red areas. I should describe them as second degree burns.

(5) The electrical resistance from foot to foot with the skin moistened was determined. Four normal students were tested as controls.

#### ELECTRICAL RESISTANCE

		<i>Heel to Heel</i>	<i>Ball to Ball</i>	<i>Instep to Instep</i>
Hussain ..	..	24,000 ohms.	18,500 ohms.	40,000 ohms.
Students ( <i>max.</i> ) ..	..	22,000 „	28,000 „	28,000 „
Students ( <i>min.</i> ) ..	..	15,000 „	12,000 „	13,000 „
Students ( <i>av.</i> ) ..	..	17,000 „	18,500 „	21,000 „

The method used was not very accurate and the error increases with the resistance. But it is interesting that the only significant difference between Hussain's feet and the students' is in the resistance from instep to instep, where his is greatly tougher. This is the part of the foot where the amateurs were burned, and it is possible that owing to the flatness of Hussain's feet (and walking barefoot in India?) this part of his feet is more resistant than the average Englishman's. Whether electrical resistance of skin has any relation to heat resistance, I do not know; it has with many substances such as copper, glass, etc.

After Hussain's attempt on the twenty-foot trench, Adcock (who had walked previously on April 7) walked the trench in 1.4 seconds, taking four steps. He was slightly burned. Two London University students, A. J. Bould and D. C. Russell, also walked the trench, and both were slightly burned.



## ROPE-SOLED SHOES TEST

During the second demonstration, Adcock walked the twenty-foot trench in dry rope-soled shoes, taking seven steps in 3.6 seconds. *The soles of the shoes were quite unburned*, only the frayed strands of rope at the edges being slightly scorched. The sole of one of the shoes was then wetted and placed in contact with the fire. Some seconds elapsed before steam was seen rising from the sole, proving that the 'spheroidal state'<sup>1</sup> (sometimes called the 'caloric paradox'), a popular 'explanation,' does not occur in fire-walking.

The results of the tests on April 9 were enlightening. It was quite clear that, whether amateur or professional, the limit of walking on a really hot fire was two steps per foot with contact-time of about one half-second each. Also, it was quite obvious that 'confidence' had a great deal to do with it. Most of the volunteers floundered more or less. Reginald Adcock, who walked the most steadily, was burned the least. And the fact that the rope-soled shoes were not damaged made it clear that the low thermal conductivity of the hot ash and wood embers injures neither normal skin nor other objects if the contact-time is about half a second.

## FINAL TESTS

Our final tests were held in the grounds of Alexandra Palace on April 20, 1937, and were both broadcast and televised. This was the first important outside function to be televised, and the new Emitron camera was used. The pictures transmitted were of perfect clarity and were witnessed by many people in and around London.

The trench at Alexandra Palace was twelve feet long, four feet wide, and nine inches deep. Four tons of oak logs, and the usual firewood, etc., were used. The fire was ignited at 7 a.m. and was in a condition for walking upon by 3 p.m.

<sup>1</sup> A state in which water or other volatile liquid forms into drops upon a smooth surface heated above the boiling point of the liquid, the drops being supported by a thin, badly conducting layer of vapour, which prevents actual contact with the heated surface. [*Standard Dictionary.*]

The temperatures of the fire were again measured by the Cambridge Instrument Co., Ltd., and were found to be 650° Centigrade in the interior, and 800° Centigrade on the surface (water boils at 100° Centigrade). This was the hottest (on the surface) fire we managed to produce at any test, and the stiff breeze which fanned the trench accounted for the high temperature.

Professor J. C. Flugel and I were responsible for the examination and washing of the walkers' feet, and Dr. E. J. Dingwall measured the times. The first to walk was Hussain, who took four steps in 1.6 seconds. His feet were uninjured, and the temperature of the soles had dropped from 68° Fahrenheit before the test, to 61° Fahrenheit immediately after. Then Adcock—for the third time—walked the trench in 1.8 seconds, taking three steps (right foot on embers twice). He was not burned in any way. (Plate X.)

#### ENGLISHMAN THE BEST 'WALKER'

An interesting fact emerged from our final tests: we found that, in fire-walking, Reginald Adcock proved himself superior to either Kuda Bux or Ahmed Hussain. Bux walked in a trench eleven feet long with a surface temperature of 430° Centigrade. Each foot was in contact with the embers twice. Adcock's performance surpassed that of the Indian's because the surface of the fire was nearly twice as hot; he walked farther; and the Englishman weighed forty pounds more—a decided disadvantage in fire-walking.

Adcock also proved himself a better walker than either of the Indians because the minimum mean time of contact for each of his feet was 0.60 second against Bux's 0.55 second, and Hussain's 0.40 second. In other words, each of Adcock's feet was, at each step, in contact with the embers for a *longer period* than the feet of the two professionals.

#### EXPERIMENTS IN HUMAN GAIT

It will be seen from above that the time of each foot on the embers was about half a second. But that was for the *whole* of the foot. Apropos of our tests, Dr. R. Plato Schwartz

carried out thousands of experiments in recording human gait. With 1,000 subjects, it was found that each person walked a distance of fifty feet at the average rate of 1.8 steps per second, normal walking. The weight-bearing time from the contact of the heel with the floor until the great toe left the floor was 0.65 second; *for only 0.05 second* was the entire plantar surface of the shoe in contact with the floor. As fire-walkers progress faster than in normal walking, it is obvious that no one portion of a fire-walker's foot is in contact with the embers for more than a minute fraction of a second. Later experiments by Dr. Schwartz, with an improved recording apparatus, suggested that there may be no interval of time at which the entire plantar surface of the foot is bearing weight.<sup>1</sup>

#### AMATEURS' REACTIONS TO FIRE-WALKING

Some of the amateur 'walkers' were asked what their reactions were before, and during the walk. The most successful walker, Mr. Reginald Adcock, said that he felt great confidence when about to begin his last walk—a confidence born of two previous attempts. He experienced no pain when walking—merely a tingling—or after the experiments. Mr. Craigie, though slightly burnt where the piece of red-hot charcoal stuck to his instep, felt no pain during or after the walk. Mr. Bould 'felt the fire somewhat,' but no intense pain. He felt a tingling sensation *after* he stepped out of the trench. During the test, he 'seemed to lose consciousness a little' and his mental state was rather unusual, but it lasted for a few seconds only. Mr. Marshall said that all he thought of when in the trench was getting to the other end. He was one of those whom Hussain took across the fire, but at no time did he feel *en rapport* with the Indian, who had guaranteed him 'immunity' from burning. It is significant that neither professional nor amateurs sustained any burn on the ball or heel of the foot. Their slight injuries were on the instep, or at the sides of the feet, where they sank into the embers.

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of the American Medical Ass.*, Chicago, December 14, 1935. His latest estimate is that no one portion of a fire-walker's foot touches the embers for more than 0.05 sec. (*New York Sun*, February 23, 1938.)

## CONCLUSION AND EXPLANATION

At our tests in 1935 we discovered that extreme callosity of the feet was not a factor in walking on fire; that the wood ash was not necessary as an insulator, because in the case of Kuda Bux, all the loose ash was blown off the fire before walking; that fasting or other preparation, mental or physical, was not necessary; that no preparation of the feet (by chemicals or local anæsthetic) was attempted; and that no trickery was employed.

In the 1937 experiments we found that the secret of fire-walking lies in (a) the short contact-time of each foot with the embers, with a limit of immunity of two steps per foot (neither professional nor amateur 'walked' more than two steps per foot without getting burnt); (b) the low thermal conductivity of burning or burnt wood embers; (c) confidence and steadiness in walking. We also discovered that damp or wet feet are a disadvantage, as the hot embers stick to them. Kuda Bux was particularly careful to see that his feet were quite dry before 'walking.' But we found no support for the theory advanced by Sir Leonard Hill, who suggested<sup>1</sup> that in the case of Bux, the increased immunity from burning was due to a power of controlling the activity of the sweat glands of the feet, so that they were abnormally dry. Another theory we exploded was that of the 'spheroidal state' explanation. This state simply does not occur in fire-walking. As we have proved with Reginald Adcock, any person with the requisite determination, confidence, and steadiness, can walk unharmed over a fire as hot as 800° Centigrade. The experiments proved once and for all that no occult or psychic power, or a specially induced mental state, is necessary in a fire-walker.

## SCIENCE VERSUS SHOWMANSHIP

In the many magazine and newspaper articles<sup>2</sup> on fire-walking it is invariably found that noisy showmanship and

<sup>1</sup> *The Listener*, October 16, 23, 30, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> For a comprehensive bibliography of fire-walking, by the present writer, see *A Report on Two Experimental Fire-Walks*, op. cit.

ecstatic ballyhoo take the place of cold scientific procedure. We are *never* told the *exact* temperature of the surface of the fire at the time of walking for the very good reason that no one thought of measuring it until I staged the first British experiments in 1935. Even the modest surface temperature of 430° Centigrade, on which Kuda Bux walked, was 'far more intense' than any fire ever seen in Southern India, according to Dr. E. H. Hunt, who witnessed many fire-walk performances there.<sup>1</sup> It is doubtful if any fire-walker in any part of the world has ever trodden a fire as hot as the one we prepared at Alexandra Palace on April 20.

To conclude, a photographic record of our tests was taken. More than 200 pictures were secured, and Mr. S. J. Worsley and I took a complete front and rear slow-motion ciné-film of all the demonstrators. It shows that Adcock walked just as calmly as Hussain. No special technique on the part of the professional is apparent. This photographic evidence together with the mass of scientific data which we secured have enabled us to elucidate a mystery which has puzzled humanity for at least 2,000 years. Those who attended the experiments, in addition to the names already mentioned, were the late Dr. William Collier, Professor J. A. Gunn, Dr. T. E. Banks, Mr. R. S. Lambert, Dr. Reginald E. Gibbs, Dr. C. E. M. Joad, Mr. S. G. Soal, the Rev. Professor E. S. Waterhouse, Professor Millais Culpin, Dr. J. Edgley Curnock, Dr. A. S. Russell, Sir Richard and Lady Gregory, Mrs. S. J. Worsley, Mr. F. Yeats-Brown, Professor Cyril Burt and Mrs. Burt, Mrs. C. A. Pannett, Dr. Joan Malleson, Mrs. J. C. Flugel, Dr. Frederick Ridley, the Rev. Dr. Ryder Smith, Dr. Brazier, Dr. G. P. Crowden, Sir Patrick Kelly, Mr. and Mrs. Reginald A. Rye, and many others.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *The Times*, September 18, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> For the official report of the last tests, see 'A Report on Three Experimental Fire-Walks,' by G. B. Brown (*Bulletin IV*, Univ. of London Council for Psychical Investigation, London, 1938).

## CHAPTER XV

### BROADCASTING THE OCCULT

THE radio is an ideal medium by which to conduct experiments in extra-sensory perception, if the right technique can be found. Unfortunately, the perfect method has not yet been evolved. On the other hand, perfect tests could be arranged by means of television.

The first broadcast of 'psychic' matter was, according to my own personal knowledge, in November, 1921. I happened to be in Berlin and on my friend's set we listened to a description of some experiments in hypnosis. I do not know where the broadcast came from, but probably from a German station. I made some inquiries and could not discover that any previous psychic broadcasts had been made.

#### AMERICAN EXPERIMENTS IN RADIO TELEPATHY

The first experiment in radio telepathy was conducted by Professor Gardner Murphy of Columbia University, in collaboration with Professors Gault and English. The test was broadcast by the Zenith Foundation<sup>1</sup> in Chicago on March 2, 1924.

The 'agents' (senders) numbered about forty and the tests included a number, a wild animal with a letter written over his head, two intersected coloured lines, a taste, a pain at some point on the hands or arm, the emotional experiences of a drowning man, and finally what a fireman feels like when he is rescuing a girl. All the stimuli were chosen automatically by means of a machine. Listeners were informed of the general nature of the stimulus, whether it was an animal, a number, and so on.

<sup>1</sup> The Zenith Foundation has also more recently staged radio competitions in connection with Dr. Rhine's E.S.P. cards.

Rather more than 2,500 persons sent in replies, and the results were actually worse than chance would lead one to expect. But two persons scored successes which were outstanding, if inconclusive. In test five, one of the senders in the studio had tied a string round the little finger of his left hand in order to convey to listeners the sensation of a dull, throbbing pain. A listener reported a similar pain in the left little finger. A young woman also sensed a pain at the base of the little finger, plus the emotions of a drowning man. These results are good, but Dr. Murphy was unable to follow them up with further tests. But however good they were, these two isolated cases out of more than 2,500 did not prove that anything but chance was responsible.<sup>1</sup>

#### EARLY OBJECTIONS TO RADIO EXPERIMENTS

" The idea of broadcasting experiments in telepathy was (so far as Europe is concerned) originated, elaborated, and submitted to the old British Broadcasting Company by me as long ago as 1924. In the spring of that year, I went to considerable trouble in devising experiments in thought-transference, with listeners as 'percipients,' which would have produced a mass of interesting data. Colours, perfumes, geometrical figures, playing-cards, numbers, scenes, etc. were included in my broadcasting scheme, which was finally rejected by the B.B.C. for some very curious reasons. On June 12, 1924, Mr. Arthur R. Burrows, then Director of Programmes, wrote me that they were considering my proposal but that they had 'to avoid doing anything which will justifiably expose us to an attack by the medical profession and other students of the mental and nervous systems.' By June 19 the Control Board had discussed my proposal, but 'it was decided that a test of this character, with an unknown number of persons listening, would carry little weight and could not in any case be convincing.' Finally, I was told that 'in view of the fact, too, that the Company would be exposed

<sup>1</sup> For a further account, see 'Telepathy as an Experimental Problem,' by Gardner Murphy in *The Case for and against Psychical Belief*, Worcester, Mass., 1927, pp. 273-4.

to a deal of criticism, some of which might be quite justifiable,' the experiment could not take place.

It is strange to read in 1939 these old B.B.C. letters of 1924. Since that date many psychic plays have been broadcast, and mediums, fortune-tellers, dowsters, fire-walkers and other 'psychics' have been on the air repeatedly.

But the old B.B.C. were strangely 'psychic' themselves when they prophesied that an experiment in radio mass telepathy would 'not in any case be convincing.' One was staged in 1927, and the results were, to put it mildly, inconclusive.

#### THE RADIO TEST OF 1927

Three years after my suggestions to the British Broadcasting Company (which, on January 1, 1927, was incorporated by Royal Charter), a similar proposal for broadcasting an experiment in telepathy was made by the S.P.R. This test was arranged to take place on February 16, 1927, between 11.15 and 11.35 p.m.

The experiment was carried out by Dr. V. J. Woolley, then a member of the S.P.R. He, Mr. S. G. Soal, and six other 'agents,' while sitting in an office in Tavistock Square, thought hard for three minutes each of five objects which Dr. Woolley successively produced at five-minute intervals. These objects were:

- (1) Two of clubs playing-card, printed in green on a black background.
- (2) A Japanese print of a skull (in a garden), on which a bird is perched.
- (3) Three sprays of white lilac in bloom.
- (4) Nine of hearts, printed in red on a black background.
- (5) Dr. Woolley himself in a bowler hat and grotesque mask.

While the 'agents' were in Tavistock Square, Sir Oliver Lodge was at the broadcasting studio at Savoy Hill, telling listeners when to 'think.' It is not quite clear why Sir Oliver was needed, as the announcing could have been done by



Dr. Woolley himself, or the experiment could have been held at Savoy Hill.

All Sir Oliver knew about the objects was that numbers one and four were 'playing cards of unusual design,' and that number two was a picture. This information he passed on to the listeners, who were asked not only to 'guess' what the various objects were, but also to record any emotions which their mental pictures of the objects might engender. Listeners were asked to send their recorded impressions to the S.P.R. immediately after the broadcast. The 'agents' themselves remained locked up in their office all night, in order that information concerning the nature of the objects could not leak out.

'Impressions' were received from 24,659 listeners, and the results were analysed by Mr. S. G. Soal and Dr. Woolley. Taking the cards first, 190 persons correctly guessed the two of clubs; but the nine of hearts, *which was neither seen nor chosen until fifteen minutes later*, was recorded at the first test by 491 listeners. But when the nine of hearts *was* chosen and thought of, only 150 persons recorded it, although 145 other persons chose the two of clubs, the card which was drawn fifteen minutes earlier. It is obvious that there was no evidence of anything but pure chance.

Test No. 2 was announced as a 'picture,' and many listeners jumped to the conclusion that it was a well-known portrait or famous painting from a gallery. Only five persons recorded a skull, though one of these said it was 'a skull in a garden,' which was correct. A sixth guess was 'human head,' though any portrait recorded would answer this description. But, as Dr. Woolley points out,<sup>1</sup> three of the successful 'skull' guessers, also correctly guessed 'flowers' (the lilac) for No. 3 test. But in the 'lilac test,' only three persons guessed correctly.

Test No. 5 was that of Dr. Woolley 'dressed up' and five only out of the nearly 25,000 listeners recorded impressions of him. But 146 thought it was one of the 'agents'; 236 guessed 'masquerading'; 73 said 'masks or faces'; and 202 'hats.'

<sup>1</sup> 'The Broadcasting Experiment in Mass-Telepathy,' by V. J. Woolley; *Proc., S.P.R.*, Vol. XXXVIII, pp. 1-9.

As was to have been expected, and as Dr. Woolley emphasizes in his report,<sup>1</sup> preferential mental associations must be taken into account. In the playing-card tests, more people called odd numbers than even, and the picture cards were hot favourites. But aces were most popular, these being called 10,766 times, the winning ace (ace of spades) being recorded 3,891 times.

After a most careful analysis, Dr. Woolley and his colleagues came to the conclusion that no indication of paranormality was evident from the broadcasting experiment. And statistical methods were difficult because, except in the case of the playing-cards, the mean chance expectation of good guesses could not be determined. This could be remedied by using a different technique.<sup>2</sup>

#### RADIO TESTS IN THE HOME

Any two or more persons can conduct their own radio tests for E.S.P. in their own homes with little trouble or expense. All that is needed is a pack of playing cards (the special 'Telepatha' or 'Zener' cards are better) and a wireless set. Tests can be carried out in experiments between friends in different houses, streets, towns, or even countries. By previous agreement between agents (senders) and percipients (receivers), competitions can be arranged as follows: On the *last* striking note of Big Ben, or the *last* of the six dot seconds of the Greenwich time signal, the sender looks at a card (plain or coloured) for one minute. The receiver, in another house or town, during the same period, tries to visualize what card (suit, value, or colour) the sender is looking at. At the end of one minute, the sender looks at another card for a minute, and so on for a number of cards. Both sender and receiver keep a careful (duplicate) record of what they respectively look at and visualize and these

<sup>1</sup> op. cit.

<sup>2</sup> A sequel to the B.B.C. experiment was the inviting of 150 of the more promising listeners to be tested in their own homes, while the 'agents' met in London. Mr. S. G. Soal, in a long and detailed report ('Experiments in Supernormal Perception at a Distance,' *Proc., S.P.R.*, Vol. XL, pp. 165-362) concluded that the results were entirely negative.

records are exchanged by both sender and receiver *at once* posting them in the nearest pillar-box. Upon receipt of the exchanged records, both sender and receiver will see what successes have been achieved. Competitions among groups of friends, or between clubs, towns, or villages can easily be arranged by means of the radio, one suggestion being that a person acts as sender to a number of his friends, who become the receivers. These can be in a group or scattered all over the country. Prizes can be awarded for the best results, and both clairvoyant and telepathic experiments can be carried out in the way I have suggested.

#### FIRST MEDIUM TO BROADCAST

The first professional medium to broadcast in this country was Miss Gene Dennis, the American *clairvoyante*,<sup>1</sup> who appeared in the 'In Town To-night' series on April 21, 1934. Another American, Miss Nella Webb, the 'astrologer to Hollywood,' broadcast on May 11, 1935. Since then, a number of astrologers, fortune-tellers, diviners, 'magicians,' 'witch-doctors,' and gypsies have been on the air.

Experiments in fire-walking<sup>2</sup> and dowsing have been both broadcast and televised, and we have had talks on modern witchcraft, ghosts, the Indian Rope Trick, treatment by hypnotism and suggestion, magic in New Guinea, pagan ritual in Renaissance art, superstitions, how to mesmerize apes, and the 'supernatural' generally. In addition, the following are amongst the 'psychic' plays which have been broadcast: *Ghostly Fingers*, *The Magician*, *Witchcraft*, *Money! Money! Money! An Exercise in Sheer Horror*, *Words Upon the Window-pane* (by W. B. Yeats),<sup>3</sup> *New Year's Eve*, and Sutton Vane's *Outward Bound*. A series of talks on astrology ('Birthday Party') announced for January 1939, aroused a storm of protest from, among others, the Astronomer Royal, Dr. H. Spencer Jones.<sup>4</sup> On November 1, 1938, the 'Under

<sup>1</sup> For tests with her, see *Confessions of a Ghost-Hunter*, op. cit., pp. 260-6.

<sup>2</sup> See Chap. XIV.

<sup>3</sup> Died January 28, 1939.

<sup>4</sup> See the *Daily Telegraph and Morning Post* for January 10, 1939; and leading article in *The Times*, January 24, 1939: ('Hullo, Gemini!').



Stage set for broadcasting from the 'haunted manor,' Meopham, March 10, 1936. In front of Harry Price are, in addition to microphone, electrical instruments which automatically indicated any abnormal happening.



Twenty Club' debated 'ghosts' which was broadcast. I was the guest speaker.

What was a golden opportunity for presenting to the public a lucid and informative account of psychical research was quite missed when the 'Inquiry into the Unknown' series was broadcast in 1934. It was a symposium by various people, some of whom knew very little of the subject about which they were supposed to talk. During this series the records of Rudi Schneider's trance breathing (afterwards found to be quite normal) were broadcast. A more amusing series were the 'Things I Cannot Explain' talks in 1937. Among the speakers were Sir Ernest Bennett, M.P., and Shane Leslie. The talks were printed in the *Listener*,<sup>1</sup> and make interesting reading. On April 15, 1939, Captain W. H. Gregson broadcast an account of his strange experiences at Borley Rectory, 'the most haunted house in England.'

#### THE HAUNTED HOUSE BROADCAST

Probably the most successful, and certainly the most interesting, broadcast of a psychic nature was the relay from the old haunted house near Meopham, Kent, which I organized for the B.B.C. on March 10, 1936. The house belonged to a friend of mine and parts of it are hundreds of years old. There was no reason to hope that we should broadcast any actual phenomena, which, as is always the case in haunted houses, are so very spontaneous, rare, and sporadic. But what we attempted to do, and what we achieved, was to give listeners a perfect picture of the *technique* employed in investigating an alleged haunted house. (See Plate XI.) Actually, one phenomenon did occur. Our sensitive transmitting thermograph had been in the 'haunted cellar' all day, and the temperature was quite constant, as shown by the straight line of the graph across the chart. But about 9.45 p.m., during the broadcast, the temperature suddenly rose slightly, and then fell sharply below what had

<sup>1</sup> From October 13, 1937 to January 5, 1938. In an article 'Things I Can Explain' (*Listener*, January 12, 1938), I summed up and answered the various speakers.

been measured during the day. This kick in the graph could not be accounted for in terms of normality.

A previous tenant of the house, Mr. G. Varley, upon hearing of our proposed broadcast, sent me the following letter, dated March 8, 1936:

#### THE CELLAR GHOST

'I am most interested as I lived in the house for six months, between September, 1931, and March, 1932, having rented the house from the present owner, and I saw the ghost on several occasions. Once, I, terrified, threw a poker at him, and he did not move—so you can believe him a hardy, if disembodied spirit!

'The house, however, was, I believe, haunted by more than one ghost, and I could tell you something about their habits and how I managed to lay, or rather, to a certain extent, curb their activities during my stay.

'Of course, almost the most persevering of the ghosts is the one that opens the cellar door. I was always shutting that damned door! Usually, several times a day, as I had a particular dislike of being "spied on" by the cellar ghost. But it was always open again when I noticed it, though only once was I actually present in the lounge when the ghost opened it. What happened on that occasion is more of a tribute to the ghost than to my courage!

'I believe undoubtingly that the ghost has a sinister influence on the people who stay in the house.

'I have really no doubt at all of the success of your broadcast, as we used to hear footsteps and mutterings every night—the ghosts, however, may object to your modern gadgets.'

(Signed) 'G. VARLEY.'

If we heard nothing unusual during the broadcast, it certainly was not the fault of Mr. S. J. de Lotbinière, B.B.C. Director of Outside Broadcasts, who was in charge of the transmission; or of myself, who set a number of 'traps' for the 'ghost.' But certain of those present at the broadcast slept in the house that night and one at least heard footsteps in the early hours which could not be accounted for. The only thrill I received that evening was the finding of a human thigh-bone, much the worse for *post-mortem* wear, which some humorist had placed in my car during the broadcast.

## SPIRITUALISTS AND THE B.B.C.


It is a common complaint among spiritualists that they do not get a square deal from the B.B.C. They complain that other religions have a certain amount of time allotted them on the air, but that the broadcasting of spiritualist services is forbidden. The reply of the B.B.C. is that spiritualism is *not* one of the conventional religions, and it is a perfectly correct answer. Comparatively speaking, there are only a handful of spiritualists, and it would be an insult to the millions of other listeners who might have to listen to the rubbish which is uttered at some spiritualist churches, or be compelled to switch off their receivers. In the United States spiritualist services are broadcast but the time has to be *bought*. I imagine that, short of obscenities, anything can be put on the air in the States, if the time is paid for. Any spiritualist service broadcast in this country would most likely be for propaganda purposes. I sympathize with those sincere believers who are deprived of listening to broadcast spiritualist services, but they are suffering because a few societies choose to introduce into their church services extravagances which are deplored by many of their members. Should the B.B.C. ever permit spiritualist services to be broadcast, details would first have to be submitted to the Corporation for approval.

As regards the philosophy of spiritualism, a number of speakers have been allowed on the air. The very first speaker on 'psychics' was Sir A. Conan Doyle, whose talk (on May 20, 1924) on 'Psychic Development' was largely connected with spiritualism. And Sir Oliver Lodge's talk, in the 'Inquiry into the Unknown' series (March 9, 1934), was of a decidedly spiritualistic flavour. Finally, Mr. Ernest W. Oaten, the editor of the *Two Worlds*, a Manchester spiritualist weekly, was permitted to broadcast a talk on spiritualism a few years ago. But these talks were in no sense services. As I write these lines, I have before me a cutting from a recent issue of a spiritualist weekly<sup>1</sup> containing

<sup>1</sup> The *Spiritualist News*, December 3, 1938. The advertisement appeared at 'east three times.



an advertisement announcing that the Rev. Dick Sheppard and the Rev. Vale Owen, *both of whom are dead*, 'will speak on spirit life and on the spirit of Christmas.' Tickets of admission (1s. and 1s. 6d.), if not sold at the 'usual agencies,' had to be obtained in advance—just like booking a seat for a theatre or cinema. There is no mention of any medium or trance address—just the plain statement that these two distinguished and deceased divines 'will speak' on a certain date and at a certain hour selected by those responsible for the show. That such a stunt should be staged, or that such an advertisement should appear is so unbelievable that I will reproduce it photographically. Here it is, and the use of the cross should be noted:



**DICK SHEPPARD**  
 (Rev. H. R. L. Sheppard, late Canon  
 of St. Paul's and St. Martin-in-the-  
 Fields) and the Rev.

**VALE OWEN**  
 will speak on  
**SPIRIT LIFE and on the SPIRIT  
 OF CHRISTMAS**  
 at  
**The Cory Hall, Cardiff**  
 on  
**Friday Evening, 16th Dec., 1938**  
 Admission by ticket only

Apparently these exhibitions are run by a concern called the 'Dick Sheppard Spirit Mission,' from a house named, of course, 'St. Martin's,' and from another issue<sup>1</sup> of the same journal we learn what 'Dick Sheppard' said at a previous meeting. Here is his soul-stirring message from the grave: 'To all people who on earth do dwell—I send greetings. May you all learn, and realize, the Truth. I have been appointed to a position of authority, and *trust*. I am responsible to God and to His beloved Son Jesus Christ, whom I hope to serve all the days of my life. I could not seek any greater honour. For the peoples of the earth I have a wonderful message. . . . There is *no* death. . . .' There is a whole column of this ridiculous twaddle, and my only point in bringing it to the reader's notice is to emphasize how *utterly impossible* it would be for the B.B.C. to run the risk of insulting millions of listeners by broadcasting such stuff. As it is, it would be interesting to learn what the surviving relatives of Canon Sheppard and Vale Owen think about it all.

#### ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY'S INQUIRY

I understand that the question of broadcasting spiritualist services was one of the subjects discussed by the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Spiritualism, which began its labours in March, 1937. Dr. Francis Underhill, Bishop of Bath and Wells, chairman of the Commission, stated in a Press interview<sup>2</sup> that its sole aim is to 'arrive at the truth' concerning psychic phenomena. No report has yet been issued. Mr. Oaten, in his address<sup>3</sup> to the Commission, declared that 'the Church . . . has used its influence in Parliament, in the courts, in society, and through the B.B.C., to ignore, humiliate, and boycott us.'

In this chapter I have been able to deal only with the broadcasting in this country and in the United States, as I could not obtain reliable data concerning Europe and nations

<sup>1</sup> December 10, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> *News-Chronicle*, March 11, 1938.

<sup>3</sup> *Spiritualism and the Church. An Address Given before the Archbishop of Canterbury's Committee*, by E. W. Oaten, Manchester, 1937, p. 21.

farther afield. But I must mention that my friend M. René Sudre, the distinguished French psychist and Scientific Editor of *Le Journal*, has broadcast from the Eiffel Tower regularly at least once each week for nearly twelve years, often on psychic subjects. This, I think, is a longer run than can be boasted by any British broadcaster. And Dr. W. H. C. Tenhaeff, of Utrecht University, has frequently spoken on scientific psychical research from the Dutch radio stations, and his talks have proved immensely popular.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to the B.B.C. for kindly supplying some of the data incorporated in this chapter.

## CHAPTER XVI

### X BOOKS THAT HAVE MADE HISTORY

IT would be no exaggeration to say that were it not for a certain few books which have been published during the past fifty years or so, neither psychical research nor spiritualism would have persisted down to the present day; in fact, as I have pointed out in the 'Introduction,' had it not been for the writings of Andrew Jackson Davis, it is very improbable that spiritualism *per se* would have been 'invented' at all. And Davis himself was indebted to Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) for many of his ideas. In the same way, psychical research has been kept alive by the published work of a very few men, whose books I propose to mention. If a person reads only these books, he will find all he needs to know about psychical research and spiritualism.

I do not propose to include in my list works on psychology or philosophy. Most of the distinguished psychologists and philosophers have been—or are—concerned with psychical research, and men like Henri Bergson, William James, William McDougall, J. MacMurray, Cyril Burt, J. C. Flugel, William Brown, C. E. M. Joad, Morton Prince, C. D. Broad, R. H. Thouless, J. A. Hadfield, and others have written largely on matters which are closely allied with psychics. But, with few exceptions, their interest in psychical research can be described as academic rather than practical, and it is mainly with the experimenters that this chapter deals.

### CLASSIC EXPERIMENTS WITH HOME

The book which, more than any other, was responsible for the interest in physical phenomena in the latter part of last century was Viscount Adare's *Experiences in Spiritualism with*

*Mr. D. D. Home*,<sup>1</sup> with an introduction by his father, the Earl of Dunraven. Fifty copies of this book were printed privately and circulated among those friends of Lord Adare who had sat with the great medium. The sittings were held in London, Malvern, Norwood, and elsewhere, during the years 1867-9. The most remarkable and varied phenomena were witnessed. They included table-tilting, raps, fire-handling, paranormal playing of an accordion, manifestations by the spirit of Dr. John Elliotson, who had recently died (1868), 'spirit' music, materializations, elongations, and so on.

#### MIRACLES IN VICTORIA STREET, WESTMINSTER

The most famous phenomenon was the alleged 'levitation' of Home during a séance in a room on the third floor of Ashley House, Victoria Street, on Sunday, December 13, 1868. There were present at this séance Lord Adare, Captain Charles Wynne, the Master of Lindsay and, of course, Home. After various phenomena, during which 'a chair moved of itself from the wall up to the table,' and 'Adah Menken' communicated, Home said: 'Do not be afraid, and on no account leave your places.' Home then became 'both elongated and raised in the air,' and walked into the next room. The sitters heard the window being raised and a few moments later Home appeared *outside* the séance-room window, which he opened 'and walked in quite coolly.' According to the sitters, he had floated over Victoria Street, from one room to another. A little later, Home, stiff and horizontal, again shot through the window head first, returning feet foremost—the second levitation that evening.

This levitation 'miracle' has been much criticized. The sitters were in the dark (though a little light may have been reflected from the gas-lamps in the street below) and there was no moon. Also, outside each of the windows was a

<sup>1</sup> Thought to have been published in 1870. But I have a copy presented by the Earl of Dunraven to his daughter, with the following inscription: 'To Augusta Vivian [i.e., Lady Arthur Pendarves Vivian] from her affectionate father, July 1869,' proving that the book was published during that month, in which the last of the Home séances was held.

balcony and two string-courses running between them. I think it would have been possible for Home to have traversed this space quickly and normally, in the manner of the 'cat-burglar' of later date. It is doubtful if Lord Adare himself was convinced that the feat was a psychic one. Reading between the lines of his report, he rather implies that Home *could* have played a trick on them.

#### A BANNED BOOK

*Experiences in Spiritualism* created nothing less than a sensation. Owing to the standing of its author and the social position of the sitters, 'orthodoxy' could not help but notice it. This book was severely criticized on account of the quite unscientific way in which it was written. There were few details of the séances and little attempt was made to rule out possible fraud. But against this, it must be stated that the book was merely a series of private letters, reproduced verbatim, from Lord Adare to his father.

Very soon after the book had been issued to his friends, Lord Adare regretted having printed it. He asked the sitters to return their copies. Many did so and these were destroyed. But a few remained in circulation, and the work became of extreme rarity.<sup>1</sup> Whether the imperfections of the book itself, or the hostility of the scientists, or the condemnation of the Roman Catholic Church was responsible for the withdrawal, I do not know. Popular rumour said that the Church had banned it—which is more than likely, as the Dunravens were an influential Roman Catholic family. However, in 1924, when psychical research had become much more 'respectable,' the author (then the Earl of Dunraven) permitted the S.P.R. to reprint<sup>2</sup> (with some omissions) this famous book.

<sup>1</sup> I have three copies, with different bindings, in my collection.

<sup>2</sup> *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. XXXV, June, 1924 (Part 93).

## SHOCKS FOR THE ROYAL SOCIETY

One of those who was impressed by Lord Adare's reports was Professor (later Sir William) Crookes, F.R.S., and in 1871 he began investigating Home himself. His experiments with this medium, and with the charming Florrie Cook were responsible for another famous book, his *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism*, the complete edition of which was issued in 1874. Various papers from the *Quarterly Journal of Science* (of which Crookes was editor) are reprinted in this little volume, which was attacked by scientific orthodoxy in no uncertain fashion. Dr. W. B. Carpenter, his arch-enemy, hurled abuse (much of it anonymous) at Crookes because he stated that Home had produced paranormal phenomena under scientific conditions. Carpenter hinted that the Royal Society would take some action in the matter. That this august body was shocked by Crookes's revelations is certain, but the scientific achievements of the great physicist made his position invulnerable.

## A CLASSIC OF PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

Probably the greatest book on psychical research ever written is *Phantasms of the Living*, published by the S.P.R. in 1886. This two-volume work of 1,416 pages was compiled by Edmund Gurney, Frederic W. H. Myers, and Frank Podmore. If the S.P.R. had nothing else to its credit, this vast epitome of psychic happenings will for ever remain a memorial to the work of the Society, which was only four years old when they issued it. The book embraces the whole gamut of paranormal mental phenomena, such as telepathy, dreams, hallucinations, hypnotism, witchcraft, etc. It discusses comparative religion, psycho-physics, and biology in relation to psychical research and criticizes the evidence to date for the various alleged phenomena. The work was brought up to date in 1922 by Mrs. Henry Sidgwick in the *Proceedings*<sup>1</sup> of the S.P.R., and a much abridged edition<sup>2</sup> of the original book was published in 1918.

<sup>1</sup> *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. XXXIII, pp. 23-429.

<sup>2</sup> London, 1918.

A year or so later, Myers produced his second classic, *Human Personality*,<sup>1</sup> which deals with the phenomena of trance, phantasm, genius, personality, sleep, hypnotism, automatism, etc. This will remain a standard work for many years to come.

#### THE VERSAILLES VISIONS

A little book vastly different from those I have described above was published<sup>2</sup> in 1911 under the title of *An Adventure*. On the title page were the names 'Elizabeth Morison' and 'Frances Lamont,' pseudonyms which hid the identity of two distinguished scholars named respectively C. Anne E. Moberly and Eleanor F. Jourdain. The former was Principal of St. Hugh's College, Oxford; the latter subsequently became her vice-principal and successor at St. Hugh's. It appears that ten years previously (i.e., on August 10, 1901), these two ladies happened to be in Paris and took the opportunity of visiting Versailles. They wanted to see the Petit Trianon. Failing to find it, they began to feel 'depressed.' They were strangers, they were lonely and, apparently, they had lost their way. Then the wind seemed to drop and the scenery and trees, according to our adventurers, appeared flat and two-dimensional 'as though painted on canvas,' as was afterwards recorded. They moved on towards some farm buildings, near which they met two official-looking persons in green uniforms. They thought they were gardeners. They asked the way to the Petit Trianon and were rather roughly ordered to go 'straight on.' Then they passed a curious plough—at least, it was thought curious when they discussed the matter a week later. Then they came to a cottage, outside which Miss Jourdain—only—saw a woman and a child. Suddenly they heard the sound of a running man. It was a youth in a green cloak who stopped abruptly in front of them. He rapidly, and not unkindly gave them certain directions which would enable them to get to the Petit Trianon. So on they went, and passed a stone kiosk

<sup>1</sup> *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, Longmans, London, 1903, and several later editions.

<sup>2</sup> London, 1911.



at the entrance to a narrow grotto. On the wall of the kiosk was sitting a repulsive-looking man with a pock-marked face. However, they said nothing to each other and continued their journey over a small footbridge by the side of a waterfall. Finally, they came to the Petit Trianon itself, outside which a lady was sketching—seen only by Miss Moberly, who admits thinking she was a tourist. Everything then appeared quite ordinary, and still no comment on the surroundings or people was made by either lady. They joined a group of tourists who were being ‘guided’ over the house, and then returned to Paris.

#### THE ‘ADVENTURERS’ MAKE A DISCOVERY

The two ladies had spent an afternoon at Versailles, as many tourists have before and since, *without seeing one thing strange enough to warrant comment upon at the time of their visit.* It is important to bear this in mind. But *a week later*, when the trip was being discussed *for the first time*, something was said that caused them to wonder whether everything had been quite normal. For example, one lady had seen things missed by the other. Miss Moberly had not seen the cottage or plough and her companion had not noticed the sketching woman. They thought all this very curious, apparently forgetting that most people are very bad observers and that it is not unusual on a walk for one person to miss things seen by his friend—especially if notes are compared *a week later*. And our two ‘adventurers’ began to compare notes, and the more they ‘compared,’ the stranger their adventure seemed. Finally, they came to the conclusion that on that August afternoon, 1901, they had stepped back in Time 112 years, and had walked right into the French Revolution of 1789! They were so excited that they sat down and wrote independent accounts of what they thought they saw on that ‘historic’ afternoon. But their reports were written just a week too late to be of any real value.

## UNSCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Having satisfied themselves that a miracle had happened, they set about proving it! Obviously, this was most unscientific. Instead of analysing every incident in terms of normality, they began hunting for evidence which would support their 'magical' hypothesis. Of course, they found it: *for ten years* they searched archives, examined original documents, delved into old books, asked questions. In ten years they had found what they wanted to find: they 'discovered' that the lady sketching was probably Marie Antoinette; the pock-marked man was 'placed' as the Comte de Vaudreuil, a notorious courtier; they found on an old map of the Trianon gardens the stone kiosk and the grotto—which had actually disappeared scores of years previously. In fact, they found all that they wanted.

Having utilized this mass of evidence in support of their story, the ladies decided to publish. This they did in a small volume, *An Adventure*, which, as I have stated, was issued under assumed names. Were they ashamed to put their real names to such a preposterous story? Their book appeared in 1911, and met with a mixed reception. The spiritualists welcomed it with open arms as the strongest evidence for survival. On the other hand, the S.P.R. slated it.<sup>1</sup> The general public—or many of them—accepted the book at its face value and the 'Versailles visions' became a classic. And yet, very curiously, it was *not* a 'best-seller.' The first three editions (1911, 1913, 1924) were issued by three different publishers, and the fourth and later editions contain a Preface by Miss Edith Olivier (who has seen similar visions herself) and a 'Note' by J. W. Dunne. The original documents pertaining to this case were, for some unknown reason, deposited in the Bodleian Library. I think it can be fairly said that it was solely on account of the academic standing of the authors that *An Adventure* ever saw the light at all. And that must be the explanation of the Bodleian accepting the papers connected with the affair.

<sup>1</sup> *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. XXV, p. 353 *et seq.*

## THE END OF THE VERSAILLES VISIONS

Just before Christmas, 1934, Dr. C. E. M. Joad and I made a special visit to the Petit Trianon in an effort to recapture some of the impressions recorded by the authors of *An Adventure*. With map in hand, we traversed the familiar paths of the story. We neither saw nor heard anything unusual, except that the place did appear rather depressing on that murky December afternoon.

Towards the end of 1937 I received a manuscript from a gentleman quite unknown to me—Mr. J. R. Sturge-Whiting. To my astonishment, it was his 'answer' to *An Adventure* and he asked me whether I could find a publisher for it, and perhaps write a Foreword to the work. I did both and the *Mystery of Versailles*<sup>1</sup> duly appeared. Mr. Sturge-Whiting, who knew little or nothing about psychical research, attacked the story from a rationalistic angle. Instead of assuming that the various incidents recorded in *An Adventure* were miraculous, as did the authors, he assumed that they were normal and actually proved it. This he has succeeded in doing, incident by incident, and a perfectly rational solution to the mystery is the result. He has proved that if the heroines of the Versailles adventure had devoted more time in trying to rationalize what they saw instead of spending ten years seeking evidence to support their belief in a miracle, the book never would have been written, and psychical researchers would have been spared many sleepless nights. Mr. Sturge-Whiting has proved that faulty perception, lapses of memory, an irresistible subconscious urge to accept a supernormal explanation of an occurrence when a normal one was available, plus a certain credulity and subconscious elaboration, are the real reasons why we ever heard of the 'adventure' at all.

<sup>1</sup> *The Mystery of Versailles: A Complete Solution*, by J. R. Sturge-Whiting, London, 1938.

## EFFECT OF THE VERSAILLES BOMBHELL

When Sturge-Whiting's book appeared, there was a terrible to-do among the spiritualists. Columns of abuse—not criticism—were hurled at him in the spiritualist Press for his daring to knock the bottom out of the 'greatest ghost story of all time.' And one ardent 'believer' I met literally screamed at me for supporting him. It was very amusing—and rather pathetic. The lay journals noticed the book fully, though some reviewers appeared rather hurt that the book was ever written: 'It seems such a shame to spoil a good story,' etc. *The Times*<sup>1</sup> devoted nearly a column to reviewing *The Mystery of Versailles*. The writer stated, which is a fact, that Sturge-Whiting was the first to approach the mystery in a scientific manner, 'that is, he reminds us that it is a waste of time to theorize about a phenomenon before ascertaining that the phenomenon did occur.' *The Times* reviewer concludes: 'Mr. Sturge-Whiting can fairly claim that he has laid the Trianon ghosts for good and all.' To sum up, I suggest that the reader secures both *An Adventure*<sup>2</sup> and its solution, and studies them carefully. He will then be able to judge whether the two ladies were the victims of a self-deceptive phenomenon, or that a miracle did in fact occur at Versailles. I have no doubt what his verdict will be.

## DREAMING THE FUTURE

Another book which made history was J. W. Dunne's *An Experiment with Time*.<sup>3</sup> It propounded a new theory, that the 'now' can be regarded as existing partly in the past, and extending partly into the future. The author does not pretend to make a contribution to psychical research, and he appears rather ashamed of the fact that the phenomena which attracted his attention fall within the field. But his experimental methods and results are such as to make his

<sup>1</sup> *Times Literary Supplement*, July 2, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> Now published by Faber and Faber.

<sup>3</sup> London, 1927.

work the ranking contribution of many years to our science. One must speak with somewhat less certainty of his conclusions. Many readers have extreme difficulty in following him at all; and others who follow him will not agree that his experiments lead inevitably to these conclusions. But the book is one which every psychical researcher must study with great care. He was led into these experiments by a series of remarkable precognitive dreams. When he realized that he was seeing in these dreams events that actually occurred the following day or even several days later, he thought at first there must be something eccentric in his relation to reality, which made him perceive large blocks of personal experience displaced from their proper positions in Time. He finally concluded that his experience was normal, that any experimenter could duplicate it, and that it arose through a peculiarity in the structure of Time which had been previously overlooked.

\* As I have hinted, Dunne's book is not easy to read. But two lucid expositions of his theory have been published: one<sup>1</sup> by H. G. Wells, the other<sup>2</sup> by J. Malcolm Bird. Mr. Wells in his article warns people against placing too much confidence in dreams. He says: 'Very rarely have they a convincing quality of reality. The dream artist in us is essentially and incurably unsystematic and maundering. We all, as our attention sinks down towards the threshold of consciousness, become false and incoherent in our associations. Every sleeping, hypnotized, anæsthetized, or dreaming man is, so to speak, insane. Sanity is a waking state. . . . Dream states, like drug states, are a dangerous field of exploration for any but very specially endowed and guarded minds.'

A second edition of *An Experiment with Time* was published<sup>3</sup> and in a third issue<sup>4</sup> Dunne attempted to clarify his theories. Another work, *The Serial Universe*,<sup>5</sup> continues his story, and finally *The New Immortality*<sup>6</sup> gives us a brief popular account of his experiments, with a guarantee as to the 'certainty of

<sup>1</sup> 'The Way the World is Going,' *Sunday Express*, July 10, 1927.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal*, Am. S.P.R. August, 1927, pp. 454-74.

<sup>3</sup> London, 1929.

<sup>4</sup> London, 1934, revised and enlarged.

<sup>5</sup> London, 1934.

<sup>6</sup> London, 1936.

personal immortality.' He promises us still another volume, containing further developments of his theories.

With all the author's painstaking work on the structure of Time, Dunne's theories remain theories—brilliant and suggestive as they are. Attempts have been made to duplicate his positive experiments, both in London and Oxford, with little success. On the other hand, J. B. Priestley has utilized Dunne's theme in a number of plays,<sup>1</sup> with considerable effect.

#### REALITY OF PHYSICAL PHENOMENA

An outstanding work on the physical phenomena of psychical research is Schrenck-Notzing's *Materialisations-Phänomene*,<sup>2</sup> an account of the classic experiments with Eva C., Stanislawa P., etc. It has been called 'the most outrageous book on psychical research' on account of the almost unbelievable photographs of 'phantoms' which it contains. But it made history. Other historical works on both physical and mental phenomena are: Richet's *Traité de Métapsychique*,<sup>3</sup> the books<sup>4</sup> by Frank Podmore; Zöllner's *Transcendental Physics*,<sup>5</sup> W. J. Crawford's monographs<sup>4</sup> on Kathleen Goligher; René Sudre's *Introduction à la Métapsychique Humaine*,<sup>6</sup> and my own work on Rudi Schneider,<sup>7</sup> the first account of genuine physical phenomena under rigid electrical conditions of control. Finally, I must mention Florence Marryat's *There is no Death*,<sup>8</sup> dealing with ghosts, spirits, séances with Mary Showers, Eglinton, Mrs. Guppy, Florrie and Katie Cook and a host of other mediums. This book became immensely popular.

Of the purely spiritualistic works, Sir Oliver Lodge's

<sup>1</sup> *Dangerous Corner*, 1932; *Time and the Conways*, 1937; *I Have Been Here Before*, 1937. *Johnson over Jordan* (1939) is another 'psychic' play.

<sup>2</sup> Munich, 1914. Eng. trans., *Phenomena of Materialization*, London, 1920.

<sup>3</sup> Paris, 1922. Eng. trans., *Thirty Years of Psychical Research*, London, 1923.

<sup>4</sup> See 'The Best Books to Read,' Appendix D.

<sup>5</sup> London, 1880.

<sup>6</sup> Paris, 1926.

<sup>7</sup> *Rudi Schneider: A Scientific Examination of his Mediumship*, by Harry Price, London, 1930 (and translations).

<sup>8</sup> London [1892].

*Raymond*<sup>1</sup> is the one which 'made history' more than any other. Very curiously, Conan Doyle, with all his brilliance as a writer, did not produce one work which has left its mark on either spiritualism or psychical research. In France, Camille Flammarion and his famous trilogy<sup>2</sup> influenced many unbelievers, and the same can be said of Bligh Bond's *The Gate of Remembrance*,<sup>3</sup> an account of the experiments which led to the discovery of the Edgar Chapel at Glastonbury.

I have already dealt in this work with J. B. Rhine's books on extra-sensory perception, which are still making history, even if the enthusiasm of some of his early 'converts' is waning a little.

#### THE SEAMY SIDE

As regards the negative side of psychical research and the tricks of the mediums, a few books have become historical. First I must mention Richard Hodgson's report<sup>4</sup> on the Theosophical 'miracles'—a report which revealed Madame Blavatsky's machinations in addition to her conjuring tricks. During his investigation appeared Madame E. Coulomb's *Some Account of my Intercourse with Madame Blavatsky . . . and a Full Explanation of the Most Marvellous Theosophical Phenomena*<sup>5</sup>—a complete exposure of the 'phenomena' of 'Koot Hoomi' and the other alleged 'Mahatmas.' Madame Coulomb was Madame Blavatsky's *confidante* and in charge of what might be termed the Theosophical Effects Department. She made a clean breast of it.

Books on fake phenomena and the tricks of the mediums are legion and I suppose that I, personally, must have collected some 5,000 of them. But there are a few outstanding works which contain explanations of all the most-practised dodges, many of which are still in use to-day among the

<sup>1</sup> London, 1916.

<sup>2</sup> See 'The Best Books to Read,' Appendix D.

<sup>3</sup> Oxford, 1918.

<sup>4</sup> 'Report of the Committee Appointed to Investigate Phenomena Connected with the Theosophical Society,' *Proc., S.P.R.*, Vol. III, 1885.

<sup>5</sup> Madras, 1884 (and London, 1885).

miracle-mongers. The following will for ever live in spiritualistic literature and should be consulted by every investigator, be he tyro or expert: *The Bottom Facts Concerning the Science of Spiritualism*, by John W. Truesdell;<sup>1</sup> *Revelations of a Spirit Medium*,<sup>2</sup> discussed in a previous chapter; and David Phelps Abbott's *Behind the Scenes with the Mediums*.<sup>3</sup> The Seybert Report<sup>4</sup> must also be accounted a standard work on the negative side of spiritualism.

#### IMPORTANT SOUTHCOTT DISCOVERY

Though of little psychic, yet of great psychological and historical interest is the recently discovered original manuscript by Joanna Southcott (1750-1814), the religious fanatic and seer who claimed to be the Bride of the Revelation, and the mother-to-be of Shiloh, the 'second Christ.' The reader will remember that I X-rayed<sup>5</sup> and afterwards 'opened'<sup>6</sup> her famous Box in 1927. The manuscript in question I discovered in November, 1938, and it consists of 354 folio pages, composed in doggerel verse by Joanna and written out by her boy disciple, Henry Prescott, who was known as 'Joseph.' It is called *The Christian's Robe by Faith*, and is dated September 19, 1795, when Joanna was at the height of her popularity.

But the chief interest in the volume is the most remarkable emblematical needlework binding. (See Plate XII.) Both covers and spine are adorned with religious figures and symbols worked in coloured silks on satin. The manuscript begins with a description of the binding, as follows:

'The Lord Jesus Holds the True Light. The Three Stars which is on his arm is the true light, he holds the Fulness, for his saints is

<sup>1</sup> New York, 1883. (Second Ed. 1884).

<sup>2</sup> St. Paul, Minn., 1891. A London issue, edited by Harry Price and E. J. Dingwall, appeared in 1922.

<sup>3</sup> Chicago, 1907, and many later editions.

<sup>4</sup> *Preliminary Report of the Commission Appointed by the University of Pennsylvania to Investigate Modern Spiritualism*. . . . Philadelphia, 1887 (and Philadelphia and London, 1920).

<sup>5</sup> See *The Times*, May 6, 1927, for account and photographs.

<sup>6</sup> See *The Times* for July 12 and 13, 1927. For the complete history of the opening and contents, etc., of the Box, see 'Exploding the Southcott Myth,' in my *Leaves from a Psychist's Case-Book*, op. cit., pp. 287-304.



as Stars in his hands, they fall down at his feet, singing in his Glory & they are not compleat without the key of Knowledge to open their Understanding, & they are not compleat then without the Star of his Love to wear on their Breast, & they are not compleat then without the Anker, believing that it will stand fast upon Firm Land, saying, upon this Rock I Build my Church, and the Gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Christ speaking to the Soul of a Believer, & they are not compleat then without the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, to send them Peace.’<sup>1</sup>

I have now cited the principal volumes which have made psychical research what it is to-day. For further important works, see the selected list of books in Appendix D.

<sup>1</sup> This MS. is now in the ‘Harry Price Library of Magical Literature’ in the Univ. of London.

## CHAPTER XVII

### ‘I BELIEVE . . . ’

**W**HENEVER a new book of mine appears, and after every broadcast, I receive many letters asking me exactly what and how much I believe—if, in fact, I believe anything at all—and how I account for those few phenomena which I do not damn out of hand. A day or so before I began this chapter the B.B.C. forwarded me a letter from the wife of an Essex rector, who had been asked to give a lecture on ‘ghosts.’ She appealed to me for help. She says: ‘Why does the ghost (which is presumably the etheric or astral body) not die in due course of nature, as it naturally should? What has disturbed the natural sequence of events so as to cause the unnatural prolongation of life in the astral or etheric body? I understand that it is quite a common occurrence for the etheric body to linger near the corpse—in a graveyard for instance—or for the astral body to be seen by friends of the departed person, immediately or soon after physical death. But *why* should such a “ghost” linger for years or centuries on the earth? I should be most grateful if you would give me a brief comment . . . ’ and so on.

Well, that is a good specimen of the questions which I have been asked thousands of times, and to which *there is no answer*. The terms ‘astral body’ and ‘etheric body’ are just jargon except that they do form part of the popular conception as to what is a ‘ghost.’

Before I proceed further, I must emphasize that there are very few phenomena studied by psychical researchers that have been demonstrated scientifically. Not a single case of materialization, levitation, ectoplasm or teleplasm, telekinesis, apport phenomena, transfiguration, spirit lights, psychic breezes, spirit photographs and paintings, slate-writing, voice or trumpet phenomena, spirit writing, ghosts,

spirits, hauntings, or *Poltergeists*, has been observed under conditions that would satisfy orthodox Science. Consequently, orthodox Science does not believe in them. Not one of the above phenomena can be produced—or has been produced—at will by any person claiming psychic powers under such conditions of control as would satisfy, say, a panel of Fellows of the Royal Society. Not a single alleged paranormal rap has been heard under such conditions as would satisfy orthodoxy that normality was ruled out.

The same can be said for the mental phenomena of the séance room. Telepathy, thought-transference, thought-reading, clairvoyance, clairsaudience, psychometry, billet-reading, and the rest of the extra-sensory phenomena simply do not exist—and never have existed—for scientific orthodoxy. Telepathy and clairvoyance cannot yet be demonstrated at will in the laboratory, and there is no scientific proof for such faculties, in spite of the fact that many thousands of experiments have been made by hundreds of investigators who have been *trying* to prove the existence of these supposed phenomena. And thousands of books have been written on the subject. For fifty-seven years the British Society for Psychical Research (in addition to the American S.P.R., and many other organizations) have been established for the purpose of determining the truth or otherwise of psychic phenomena, and they have succeeded in doing neither, with a few exceptions, listed below. During all this long period hardly a single phenomenon has been proved genuine to the extent that the scientists are satisfied.

#### FEW 'PROVED' PHENOMENA

And my last sentence brings me to the point where I must emphasize that certain phenomena—mostly in the field of abnormal psychology—*have* been scientifically demonstrated. These, I think, are the phenomena of dissociation, split or multiple personality, and similar subconscious activities; the phenomena of hypnosis, observable any day in many Harley Street consulting rooms; automatisms (i.e. automatic writing, speaking, painting, etc.); the phenomena of hyperæsthesia,

either normally—as in the case of Marion—or under hypnosis, when hyperæsthesia of sight, smell, touch, etc., has been observed. The 'genuine' phenomena I have listed above have been accepted by Science. Lastly, I think I ought to include dowsing in the list of 'accepted' phenomena, with the reservation that those scientists who *do* admit that certain people possess the gift, do *not* accept the 'psychic' explanation. They maintain—and I think rightly—that the faculty is a physical one, of more interest to the physiologist than to the psychical researcher.

If Science—and I am now speaking of official science, and not individuals—has not yet accepted the phenomena of the séance room, many noted scientists have done so. The names of A. R. Wallace, Sir William Crookes, Sir William Barrett, Charles Richet, Sir Oliver Lodge, F. C. S. Schiller, and others, will occur to the reader, and many more have been mentioned in this volume.

#### WHY OFFICIAL SCIENCE IS NOT CONVINCED

The reason why orthodoxy—i.e. official science—is not convinced is because, in its corporate capacity, it has never made the attempt. And the reason why the attempt has never been made is because there has been no money for such a purpose. Certainly, there have been sums of money, donated by individuals (such as Leland Stanford and Seybert), available for experimentation, but there have been no *official* funds to draw upon. And what private moneys have been used fell into the hands of persons with *a priori* convictions concerning psychic phenomena, with results we know too well. I have already recorded<sup>1</sup> Professor Schiller's opinion as to why science has made no headway in psychical research. He returns to the charge in an article 'The Truth about Psychical Research.'<sup>2</sup> He says: 'At present the subject often seems attractive to minds of the sort required, but they dare not devote themselves to it. For there is no career in it, and their friends and parents and guardians would subject them to great pressure if they proposed to throw themselves

<sup>1</sup> Page 72, *ante*.

<sup>2</sup> *Nineteenth Century*, July, 1927, pp. 65-6.

away upon it. But if there existed endowed posts comparable in value with university professorships, they could afford to follow their bent, and to enter on the arduous training qualifying for them. Moreover, such well-paid posts would exercise a magical effect upon the academic mind. They would be to it conclusive proof that a subject which could support a professor was genuine, and an integral and essential part of science or learning. Even if the development of psychic faculties did not enter into any professional or technical training (as it easily might!) it would become part of a liberal education, if only its endowment were sufficiently liberal! The ultimate truth, then, about psychical research is that its future is essentially a question of funds. The truth about its phenomena can be ascertained, the scandal of the present doubts and disputes can be terminated, the most marvellous discoveries may possibly be made, if only the public will put up enough money. Until this money has been found and used, it must remain in doubt, not only what the real facts are, but also whether the human race in general is genuinely concerned to know the truth about its nature and destiny.'

I reiterate that there is no money, officially, for psychical research. The reader has seen<sup>1</sup> that I have made some attempt at remedying this; but the fact remains that, in this country at any rate, the universities have no money for *officially* determining the truth or otherwise of psychic phenomena. When we find well-paid professorships or readerships offered by universities to suitable men, then the truth of paranormal phenomena will be established. The evidence for such phenomena is overwhelming. But it will never be accepted by the ordinary person until Science—in the shape of a Chair or Department at some university—places its *cachet* on it. One of the chief arguments against official recognition of psychical research is the fact that fraud and charlatanism are rampant, and scientists, being busy men, have no time to weed out the good 'subjects.' The licensing of mediums, as suggested in my Bill,<sup>2</sup> would at least get rid of most of the fakers, and lighten the work of the university investigator.

<sup>1</sup> Page 63, *ante*.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix C.

## 'I BELIEVE . . . '

I will now state what, in my opinion, I have observed in the way of paranormal phenomena. I must emphasize that I am speaking personally and unofficially. My experiences are based on thirty years' intensive experimentation, in many parts of Europe, and under conditions where fraud simply could not have occurred. I must claim some authority for deciding whether fraud was possible or not, as methods of deception have been a special study of mine—from necessity and not from choice—a vital study for anyone claiming to be a scientific investigator.

I am convinced that I have witnessed telekinetic phenomena—the displacement of objects such as the levitation and intelligent movements of various toys, musical instruments, waste-paper basket, small articles of furniture, the billowing, waving, shaking, and bulging of curtains enclosing the séance 'cabinet,' often violently. I have heard raps, knocks, and other percussive phenomena, often at command, which were not produced normally. I have seen séance 'lights', some percussive and some lambent, mostly of a bluish tint, which could not be explained by any laws with which we are at present acquainted.

## PSEUDOPODS

I have seen, felt, pinched, photographed and played tug-of-war with 'pseudopods': teleplasmic masses resembling arms, hands, tubes, a triangular leg, a chocolate-coloured leg, a snow-man, childlike-form, luminous masses, etc., all showing volition and, in some cases, intelligence. These I have seen when every person in the room was electrically controlled and fraud was absolutely precluded. Less tangible, but just as interesting, were the 'brushings' felt by sitters at séances with Rudi Schneider when he was at the top of his form. I experienced the same curious sensation myself—it was just as if something, invisible and intangible, was squeezing itself between the backs of the sitters' chairs and the net

cage which enclosed us. Each sitter felt it in turn, as the 'something' passed round the circle. I have never experienced a similar phenomenon with any other medium.

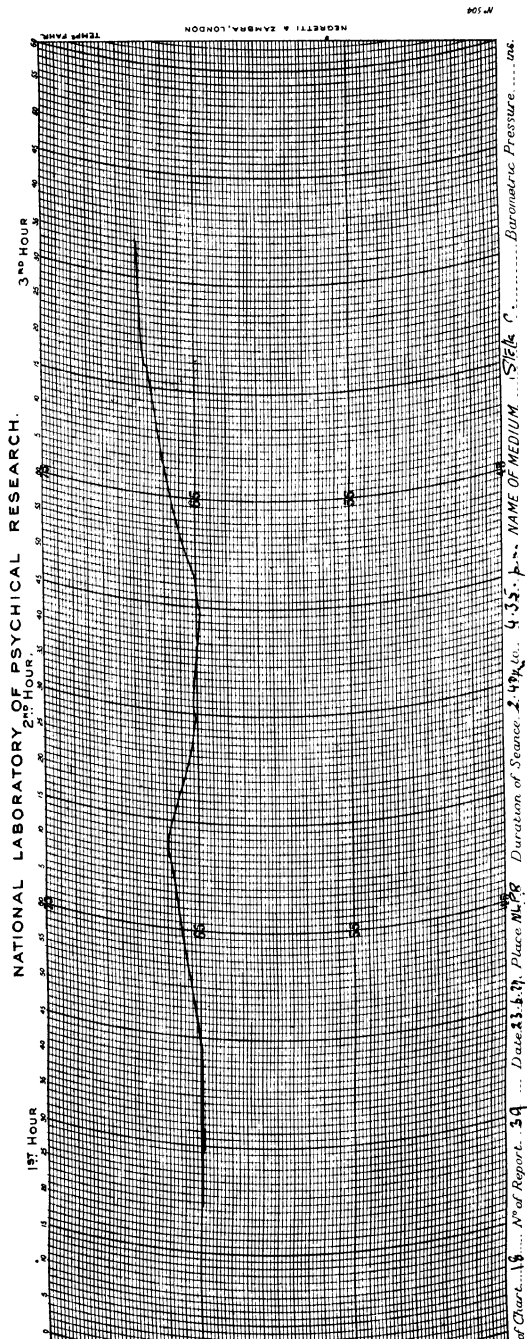
#### FULL-FORM MATERIALIZATIONS

One has heard—and occasionally still hears—of full-form materializations being seen at séances, but almost invariably they can be put down to fraud, as is proved by the number of exposures and prosecutions of those physical mediums masquerading as spirits. They are seldom seen under good conditions—the real test of genuineness. But if pseudopods, limbs, and hands have been materialized and witnessed under a perfect control of all concerned—as I am convinced they have—that is a sufficient answer to those who assert that full-form materializations are 'impossible.'

If 'Rosalie' was genuine, then I have witnessed a 'living' or semi-living full-form materialization. But the 'Rosalie' experience was as unique as it was baffling, and that astounding 'child' was 'produced' under conditions which would not be accepted by one materializing medium in a thousand. Or, if accepted, nothing would happen. It is now more than twelve months<sup>1</sup> since I wrote the 'Rosalie' report in bed at my club, and several unsuccessful attempts have been made to induce the mother to consent to further experiments. But she is terrified at the thought that our arrangements might have the effect of driving her 'daughter' away. But I am still persevering.<sup>2</sup> I am trying to work out a technique which will be acceptable to both mother and those scientists to whom I hope to exhibit the phenomenon. In particular, I want Professor C. A. Pannett to apply certain tests which would, I am sure, elucidate the mystery. A medical examination would not be difficult under the conditions which obtained when I saw the girl.

<sup>1</sup> I am writing this on December 17, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> May, 1939. There is now a possibility of my attending another séance during next winter.



Graph showing thermal variations at sitting with Stella C., June 23, 1927. Note how temperature fell 2-30° Fahr. in 33 minutes during the séance





Laboratory, séance-room and workshop of University of London Council or Psychical Investigation (formerly National Laboratory of Psychical Research).

## THERMAL PHENOMENA

Another phenomenon for which I am convinced there is ample evidence is the thermal changes which occur during the trance state of some psychics: the apparent fall in temperature in the immediate vicinity of the medium (see Plate XIII) and/or cabinet—especially a stratum of cool air near the floor, *not* caused by draughts. This phenomenon was noted many years ago, but was thought to be a physiological one. However, our sensitive transmitting thermographs proved that the temperature *was* lowered, though I must admit that the graphs would have been more convincing had they been secured in a thermal chamber where the temperature could be kept constant and automatically controlled. Akin to thermal changes which can be measured are the cool breezes, winds, etc., the strength of which cannot easily be estimated. These cold air currents are experienced with certain mediums and, speaking personally, I have no doubt that they do occur. I have felt them at many séances. If we have proved that the medium can extract heat from the atmosphere, this heat must be utilized in some way. As our graphs show that the temperature was lowered during the production of physical phenomena (such as telekinetic movements), it is reasonable to suppose that the heat thus extracted was converted into energy intelligently directed subconsciously by the medium. I think that this is the solution of all physical séance-room phenomena, witnessed under good conditions. But the mechanism of this thermal conversion and intelligent direction is not yet understood.

## GENUINE HAUNTINGS

There is such a vast volume of evidence for the haunting of both places and buildings, that it may appear rather late in the day to discuss whether such things as 'ghosts' have been seen. The evidence is not only vast, but impressive. But the fact remains that very few well-authenticated reports of such phenomena have been published. Everyone—or nearly

everyone—appears to have seen a ghost, or knows of a haunted house. But when, after much trouble and correspondence, one is at last fortunate enough to get permission to investigate an alleged haunt, usually nothing happens, or one is told that one has arrived at an inopportune moment for the ghostly tenant. Newspaper reports especially are not to be relied upon. The craze for publicity, or the hope that kudos—or something even more tangible—will accrue to the possessor of a picturesque haunt is usually the reason why we hear of these newspaper ghosts. But I am certain that houses are affected by influences—evil, beneficent, or mischievous—and I have proved it over and over again. In particular, I consider that the genuineness of many *Poltergeist* cases has been established. As a lad, I was deeply impressed and absolutely convinced of the manifestations for which the Germans have supplied us with a most appropriate term. The house in question was in Shropshire and the typical stone-throwing, window-rattling, and door-slamming ‘ghost’ made a great impression on my adolescent and receptive mind, and from then onwards I decided to become an investigator.<sup>1</sup> I believe in *Poltergeists*—again from experience and experiment—and have investigated them in several European countries. The furniture-moving *Poltergeist* I experienced at Hall, near Innsbrück, was in every respect similar to its brother which I investigated at Brixton. *Poltergeists*, like ghosts, are of one family and nationality.

#### MY HAUNTED RECTORY

Just as my first ‘case’ convinced me of the existence of what the Germans call ‘rattling spirits,’ so one of my latest has finally and absolutely convinced me of what, for want of a better term, we call ‘ghosts.’ This is a rectory which, in 1929, I was asked to investigate. Little did I think, as I sped the sixty odd miles northwards in my car, that I would spend nearly ten years in an effort to discover who or what was affecting the house—and finally rent the house myself, which I did for twelve months, from May, 1937 to May, 1938. The

<sup>1</sup> See my *Confessions* (‘The Ghost that Stumbled’), op. cit., pp. 15–24.

case has correspondences with that of the famous Berkeley Square ghost.<sup>1</sup>

This is not the place to detail the extraordinary occurrences which have been witnessed at this rectory,<sup>2</sup> as the full and authenticated report of the investigation will form the subject of my next book. But I may mention in passing that many of the phenomena known to psychical research have been recorded there. They include two apparitions, one of which, a nun, has been seen by many people, including the three patrons of the living, two of the rectors, the wife of one of them, a London maid-servant, a reporter, and the wife of a B.B.C. director. In addition, the last rector kept a diary of psychic events, which is as exciting as a thriller, and which forms a book in itself. Mysterious writing on the walls; spontaneous outbreaks of fire;<sup>3</sup> the violent displacement of objects; the sudden appearance, disappearance and reappearance of things not previously in the house, such as a 22-carat gold wedding-ring; incessant bell-ringing, stone-throwing, etc., are common events at this amazing thirty-six-room rectory, which the Ecclesiastical Commissioners have now finally disposed of as no tenant could be found to reside there and rectors fought shy of taking up residence with—what?

#### MENTAL TELEVISION

I believe in spontaneous telepathy and clairvoyance, but not—as yet—in the induced telepathy of the séance-room or the laboratory. The experiments in extra-sensory perception which are now being made in various seats of learning throughout the world may establish the fact that these faculties can be demonstrated to order. But so far this has not been proved to my satisfaction. However, I am quite sure that persons—not particularly gifted in any way—do get periods of lucidity when they are able to transmit their thoughts, impressions, fears and wishes spontaneously and

<sup>1</sup> See *Haunted Mayfair*, by Harry Price, London, 1939, a brochure issued by Maggs Bros., Ltd.

<sup>2</sup> Borley Rectory, near Sudbury, Suffolk.

<sup>3</sup> Borley Rectory was finally destroyed by fire during the night, February 27-28, 1939. See *The Times*, March 1, 1939.

instantaneously to another mind, exactly like sending out a televised picture. I have experienced something of the sort myself on more than one occasion. It is an interesting and valuable field, worthy of intensive cultivation.

My remarks concerning telepathy and clairvoyance can be applied to prevision, precognitive dreams and the lucidity exhibited by some psychics. I have not the faintest doubt that Stella C., in her mental picture of the front page of the *Daily Mail*, which was not published until weeks later, had a moment of lucidity as rare with her as it is with most other mediums.<sup>1</sup> But why the *Daily Mail*? Why at that precise time and place? What chain of events in her subconscious mind led up to that extraordinary description of the Andrews advertisement? There is, at present, no answer to these questions. Attempts to *induce* similar lucid periods with Stella signally failed.

In the same way, Mlle Laplace somehow managed to become cognizant of what had happened, and what was going to happen, to Dr. Tillyard.<sup>2</sup> I am quite certain that this lucidity was spontaneous, and am doubtful if such a state could be induced. But this is where a university Department of Parapsychology would function: it would experiment with Mlle Laplace until it was determined, one way or the other, whether the French medium's subconscious mind could function to order in this way.

#### DO HUMAN EMANATIONS PERSIST?

The 'spontaneous' theory can hardly be applied to the brilliant results achieved by some trance mediums when 'contacting' with the mind of a person who is dead. A typical—and good—case is that of Mrs. Eileen Garrett and the ill-fated Irwin of the R101 airship disaster.<sup>3</sup> My own theory concerning such cases is that a portion of us, an emanation of our ego or personality, or a part of our intelligence, *persists* after death, and can be picked up by a suitable mind attuned to that emanation. The 'contacting' of Mrs. Garrett with the 'persisting residue' of the departed Irwin is

<sup>1</sup> See page, 121, *ante*.

<sup>2</sup> See page 154, *ante*.

<sup>3</sup> See page 151, *ante*.

a brilliant example of this. I am convinced that this is the correct theory. I am not psychic, but am very sensitive to external influences, especially as regards buildings. When I enter a strange house I feel either miserable, happy, or fearful. Many buildings and rooms depress me; others have an exhilarating effect upon me. My theory is that abodes and places retain something of the good or bad qualities of previous owners. I believe that some mediums—literally 'sensitives'—can 'tune in' to these impressions and contact with certain emanations which are really part of the mind, ego, or personality of previous owners.

#### THE EMERGENT THEORY

This leads me to the theory of Dr. C. D. Broad, which he outlined in the Tarner Lectures, delivered in Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1923.<sup>1</sup> He suggested the term 'psychic factor' as something which may survive the dissolution of the body for a limited period. (I suggest that the period is unlimited.) This 'something,' being part of us, may survive the grave and unite itself with a suitable entranced medium and produce another 'mind,' the active portion of which belongs to the dead person. The suggestion is that it is this temporary mind (temporary so far as the medium is concerned) which 'emerges' or is born of the union and reveals details of its previous owner's life. Of course, there is no absolute evidence for this 'psychic factor,' but the emergent theory is a good one, and covers many of the facts. But it does not help us with the causation of physical phenomena, such as materializations, telekineses, etc.

#### PERIODICITY OF PHENOMENA

My 'persisting emanations' theory can be better applied to haunted houses than to the phenomena of the séance-room. I am quite convinced that certain buildings—and especially rooms—are saturated with the personalities of

<sup>1</sup> Published as *The Mind and Its Place in Nature*, London, 1925.

those (not necessarily dead) who once lived in them. During the examination of thousands of reports of typical haunts, and the collating of details and antecedent conditions, coupled with my own personal experiences, this conclusion has been forced upon me. And I made a curious and important discovery. I found that in very many cases, the phenomena or manifestations had a definite periodicity: that is, they recurred at regular intervals. Not only did they recur at definite intervals of time, but they became gradually weaker at each recurrence, and the intervals may be long or short; but they are always approximately the same in each case. There are exceptions, however, as in the case of the rectory 'nun.'

I will give two instances: the figure of the 'nun' at the rectory I rented was supposed to appear *always* on July 28. Actually, it does nothing of the sort. I have been there three years on July 28, and no sign of the figure was visible. But I found that the nun has been seen at, roughly, yearly intervals. Therefore, the periodicity of this phenomenon is twelve months.

During my examination of this case, the rector of a parish in Staffordshire wrote me to the effect that the strangest things occurred at his rectory *every September*—and only in September. Bangs on the door of the room in which he and his wife slept; footsteps on the stairs at night, etc. It was at the beginning of September, 1938, that he wrote me and he invited me to witness these things for myself. He could not guarantee that the phenomena would occur on any particular day, but he assured me that they would happen on a day in the early part of the month. Unfortunately, I could not travel so far afield myself on the days he mentioned, but I arranged for someone to be there. And sure enough the manifestations took place exactly as anticipated. And a new phenomenon was witnessed. The rector had occasion to fetch something from an adjoining room and took the candle with him, leaving his wife in the dark. 'When I returned,' he writes, 'I found her nervous and white, and she told me that as she lifted her petticoat over her head, it burst into flames, and fell to the floor with the appearance of a shower of sparks.' The full story of these occurrences will be told in the

history of Borley Rectory. Why I have mentioned the case here is because it illustrates my theory of periodicity.

#### PSYCHIC 'ACCUMULATORS'

Having proved to my own satisfaction that ghost and *Poltergeist* phenomena often occur at regular intervals of time, I was led to a theory as to why this was so. And here again the 'emanation theory' holds good. For many of the observed facts of haunted house phenomena suggest that a room or building becomes saturated with a person's ego or intelligence, which—sometimes slowly and sometimes quickly—increases or 'accumulates' exactly like a storage battery. If the emanations (personality or intelligence) are strong, then the 'battery' takes little time to fill: perhaps a few hours or days. If the emanations are weak, then the 'battery' will take longer to fill: roughly twelve months in the case of the two rectory apparitions.

But when our hypothetical 'battery' (i.e. the haunted room or place) is full, something must happen. It 'bursts' or 'explodes,' and produces a phenomenon. Then it starts charging up or accumulating all over again—hence my theory of periodicity. But with each 'charge' the 'explosion' (phenomenon) becomes weaker, until at last the battery ceases to charge and we get no phenomena. I reiterate that my observations of phenomena in haunted houses tend to show that generally the manifestations are cyclic or recurring, with a determinable periodicity.

But there are exceptions. The 'nun,' for instance, was at one time seen so frequently that the first rector (the man who built the place) actually bricked up the large dining-room window (overlooking the drive) because the 'nun' annoyed him by peering in. So the figure must have appeared more than once a year. It is now said that the window was bricked up for some other purpose (not stated). But it is admitted that the old rector declared that he often saw the figure and I can think of no other reason why the window should have been bricked up, as it quite spoils the appearance of the front of the house, which was built about 1865.



The intervals between the appearances of the 'nun' phenomenon have lengthened, as the emanations producing this particular 'ghost' have grown weaker. In other words, it now takes much longer to build up the psychic image: the emanations 'accumulate' much more slowly before producing the 'discharge' (phenomenon). But I reiterate that the 'nun' phenomenon appears to be one of the few exceptions to my theoretical psychic cycle of constant periodicity.

The mechanism of the process of the 'psychic discharge' becoming visible (as in the case of an apparition) remains a mystery to me: it may have something to do with the structure of the ether, or may be partly an electrical phenomenon. If the reader argues that my suggested 'explanation' is fantastic, I will retort that it is no more fantastic than the facts themselves, and much less fantastic than the traditional spirit hypothesis, for which there is no better evidence. And the fact remains that we know very little about these matters. Some disturbing factor in the conditions under which the human emanations are accumulating may precipitate a phenomenon. An investigator entering a house might arrive at just such a moment when a phenomenon was due to occur. His intrusion might then have the effect of discharging the psychic 'accumulator.' At least one case comes to my mind which illustrates this theory. Miss Stella C., as a young girl, on very rare occasions noted a brilliant flash of light at the precise moment when she entered her bedroom. As she opened the door, the flash occurred. Later, and experimentally, we produced these same flashes at séances. I suggest that her bedroom became gradually and periodically saturated with the psychic emanations of this remarkable medium, who herself sometimes precipitated a phenomenon in the act of opening the door—a 'disturbing factor.' It is possible that these same phenomena occurred more frequently when she did not happen to be there.

#### THE SPIRIT HYPOTHESIS

I have said little about the spirit hypothesis in this last chapter because I consider that the spiritualists have not

proved their case. I admit, however, that the spirit theory covers many of the facts. The messages alleged to have been received from the spirits never rise above the cultural level of the mediums through whom they are received, and I think that all 'spirit' phenomena will be explainable on natural, rather than 'supernatural' grounds, when we know the laws that govern them. And some faculties, such as lucidity, thought-transference, clairvoyance and allied extra-sensory phenomena are probably natural and normal to those gifted persons possessing them. And we know so little about the subconscious, and so little more about the conscious mind that, probably, either one or the other may be responsible for the mental 'miracles' we investigate. I fail to see why the spirits must be dragged in in order to bolster up a theory, however grateful and comforting, when at least as good an alternative theory is available. Coupled with this is the vast amount of humbug, charlatanism and general tomfoolery which goes by the name of spiritualism, and which appears to be the backbone of the industry. All good spiritualists agree that this is so. They realize that, to many people, 'spiritualism' and 'trickery' are synonymous terms. Spiritualism as a religion is ideal, but in my opinion there is not yet sufficient real evidence for us to be certain that the phenomena we investigate are produced by 'supernatural' powers, rather than natural ones. I have not consciously said one word in this book which could possibly offend the sincere and intelligent spiritualist who has the interests of his religion at heart. He, like myself, must realize what is going on in the movement; and, if he is honest, he must deplore it.

#### A LAST WORD TO THE SCIENTIST

My last words are directed to the scientist—especially the sceptical scientist. I implore him not to dismiss too hastily the *facts* which I have enumerated in this critical survey of fifty years of psychical research. The fact that I have devoted many years of my life to experimentation; have studied thousands of reports dealing with the subject; have travelled thousands of miles all over Europe for obtaining first-hand

experience of 'phenomena'; and have spent a fortune in seeking the truth or otherwise of psychic manifestations, must surely entitle me to a sympathetic hearing. And if I were not convinced of these things, I would not waste another moment of my time or penny of my money in further research. It is as unfair as it is futile for a person to scoff at psychical research if he has had no practical experience, and has made no attempt to investigate the subject for himself. The greatest sceptic concerning paranormal phenomena is invariably the man who knows the least about them. There is still a vast amount of work to be done, but the field has been prepared and it is now the duty of science officially to cultivate that field. If the scientist argues that his labours would be unfruitful; or that the yield would be small; or that the subject is unworthy of him; I commend to him the words of Lord Kelvin, with which I will fittingly close this volume: 'Science is bound by the everlasting law of honour to face fearlessly every problem that can fairly be presented to it.'

## APPENDIX A

### THE MEN WHO MADE PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

IT would be difficult to determine when people started to inquire into the strange happenings around them. It is probable that from the time when man began to fraternize with his fellows, there were 'investigators' into natural and supernatural phenomena. Coming to recent periods of history, the Inquisitors, the witch-hunters, the alchemists, the 'magicians'—all were 'researchers' into real or pseudo manifestations, and occult literature is full of their 'reports' and protocols. Matthew Hopkins, the witch-finder, was an infamous 'research officer' of society in general, and modern mediums should be thankful that they live in the twentieth century instead of in the seventeenth. But even during that period people not only discussed witch 'miracles'—they investigated abnormal phenomena generally, and formed themselves into groups for this purpose. For example, Ferris Greenslet tells us how Joseph Glanvill became interested: 'In February, 1665, Glanvill was the guest of Lady Conway at Ragley. The other guests were Van Helmont, Henry More and Valentine Greatrakes. The main purpose was the discussion of the supernatural world.'<sup>1</sup> It must have been a most interesting party, the direct result of which was the publication of his *Philosophical Considerations Concerning the Existence of Sorcerers and Sorcery*, which appeared in 1666. This work concerns the famed 'Drummer of Tedworth,' who made such a noise in 1663, and doubtless the Ragley house party was about this and similar wonders. Indeed, Greenslet even calls it the 'Ragley Society for Psychical Research.' But however fascinating it would be to pursue our inquiry into the doings of the early investigators, we must confine ourselves to those who have contributed something to psychical research during the last fifty years.

#### FAMOUS BRITISH INVESTIGATORS

At the time when Professor Barrett (1845-1926) founded the S.P.R., he had been engaged in psychical research for some years. In particular, his experiments (with Gurney and Myers) in telepathy are well known. He concerned himself little with physical phenomena, but took an academic interest in every phase of the

<sup>1</sup> *Joseph Glanvill*, Columbia University Press, N.Y., 1900.

occult, and devoted much time to the elucidation of the mysteries connected with all forms of dowsing. He was convinced of survival, as he personally informed the present writer.

One can hardly mention Barrett without associating him with such men as F. W. H. Myers, Gurney, Podmore and Henry Sidgwick. These were the backbone of the S.P.R. for many years. The name of Myers is synonymous with psychics and his *Phantasms of the Living* and *Human Personality* are classics for all time. Philosopher, poet, mystic, psychologist and a brilliant thinker, he is the outstanding personality of the early days of organized psychical research. His practical interest in the séance-room was not very marked, but he sat with a few mediums, including Stainton Moses, Mrs. Mellon (*née* Fairlamb), and Palladino.

When the S.P.R. was formed in 1882, Edmund Gurney became one of the honorary secretaries of the 'literary committee,' which had to deal with the collection and collation of reports on abnormal happenings and the production of a conspectus of these phenomena. The study of hypnotism and hallucinations occupied his attention and he was associated with Myers and Podmore in preparing *Phantasms of the Living*, of which he wrote a great portion. He died (aged forty-one) through an overdose of a narcotic in 1888, and his sudden death robbed psychical research of one of its greatest intellects.

Frank Podmore was also associated with Myers and Gurney in compiling *Phantasms of the Living* and was the greatest sceptic of the three, though originally a spiritualist and 'believer.' His interest in the physical phenomena of the séance-room was practical as well as academic. The tricks of the slate-writing Henry Slade disgusted him and he became a bitter opponent of all physical mediums. Podmore's contribution to psychical research is best represented by his writings and he rendered a great public service when he wrote his *Modern Spiritualism*,<sup>1</sup> *The Naturalization of the Supernatural*,<sup>2</sup> and *The Newer Spiritualism*.<sup>3</sup> These works made people realize that they were believing too much. His association with the S.P.R. (of which he was a Council member for many years) was partly responsible for the impression—still current—that the Society was ultra-incredulous and believed too little. But Podmore himself recognized the value of scientific research and admitted a residuum of psychic phenomena which could not be explained by laws at present known to us. In the last paragraph of *Modern Spiritualism* he warns readers of the 'superstition of incredulity,' chides orthodoxy for not accepting hypnotism sooner than it did, and contends that 'even the extravagances of mysticism may contain a residuum of unacknowledged and

<sup>1</sup> London, 1902.

<sup>2</sup> New York and London, 1908.

<sup>3</sup> London, 1910.

serviceable fact.' 'We must not,' he concludes, 'throw away the baby with the water from the bath.'

Among the great psychical researchers who developed the science during the closing years of the nineteenth century, Henry Sidgwick's (1838-1900) influence was the unifying agency which kept the S.P.R. together during its early period. Even as a young man he sat with the mediums of the day, and his great interest in parapsychology never left him. As first President of the S.P.R. he worked hard to establish the Society and to keep its work at a high scientific level. He experimented with a few mediums, including Herne and Williams, Mrs. Mellon, Eusapia Palladino, and Mrs. Piper. He was President of the S.P.R. for eight years and, after his death,<sup>1</sup> his wife Eleanor Mildred Sidgwick (*née* Balfour) (1845-1936) continued his work for the good of the Society. Though he sifted the evidence for 'survival' for so many years, he died an unbeliever. His wife, on the contrary died 'a firm believer both in survival and in the reality of communication between the living and the dead.'<sup>2</sup>

#### SOME GREAT EXPERIMENTERS

Contemporary with the famous men, a sketch of whose work is given above, there were experimenters who were recording remarkable results with the physical mediums. Sir William Crookes (1832-1919) was the greatest and bravest of them. His experiences with the mediums, Henry Slade, D. D. Home, and Florrie Cook have made psychic history. He was undoubtedly duped by the conjuring tricks of Slade, and students of psychic phenomena are still debating to what extent the attractive young woman, Florrie Cook (1856-1904), upon whom he expended so much time and trouble, deceived him. Florrie was a 'materializing medium' and her 'spirit control,' 'Katie King,' was as prepossessing as the medium herself. Crookes's report<sup>3</sup> caused a sensation and, for a time, his Fellowship of the Royal Society was said to be in jeopardy. The best of the phenomena were witnessed in Florrie's own home under, apparently, good conditions, and Crookes took many photographs of the materialized 'Katie.' In fact, on one occasion he embraced the spirit, and, as he tells us,<sup>4</sup> 'did as any gentleman would do under the circumstances.' Some of Crookes's pictures of 'Katie King' are extant and it is difficult to believe that the 'spirits' are not Florrie herself, or a confederate. (See Frontispiece.)

<sup>1</sup> For his life, see *Henry Sidgwick. A Memoir*, by A. and E. M. Sidgwick, London, 1906.

<sup>2</sup> S.P.R. *Proc.*, Vol. XLI, p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism*, London [1874].

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

Crookes's experiments with D. D. Home will bear much stricter scrutiny. His tests were more scientific and he brought his great knowledge of physics to bear on the construction of special apparatus with which to test the validity of the phenomena. A battle royal between Crookes and Dr. W. B. Carpenter in the pages of the *Quarterly Review*, concerning his findings, ended in a victory for the former, who lived to become the President of the Royal Society and to receive its greatest honours. But the criticisms caused him abruptly to terminate his psychic inquiries, though to the end of his long life he always maintained his belief in the mediumship of Miss Cook and D. D. Home.

Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace (1823-1903) was not only an eminent naturalist, but became a famous spiritualist, having long before given up all belief in revealed religion. His acceptance of 'survival' was based on his experiments with mediums in both England and America. He sat with 'Dr.' Monck, Mrs. Guppy, Katie Cook, Eglinton, Mrs. Ross, P. L. O. A. Keeler, Fred Evans, Mrs. Marshall, and others. Wallace was credulous and maintained that certain conjurers were in reality mediums, and their tricks, phenomena. He declared that 'Dr. Lynn,' the conjurer, was a 'real medium.'<sup>1</sup> He was a member of the committee of the London Dialectical Society, gave evidence on behalf of the medium Monck in the Maskelyne-Colley lawsuit, and published (1881) *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, a work which had a large sale.

Dr. Richard Hodgson (1855-1905) devoted the best part of his life to the British and American Societies for Psychical Research and his investigations into the Theosophical 'miracles' and the mediumship of Mrs. Piper are famous. His training as a lawyer makes his reports of particular value and his services to psychics cannot be estimated. After his death Hodgson is alleged to have 'manifested' through Mrs. Piper, but the evidence is not very good.

#### FAMOUS PROPAGANDISTS

Both Sir Oliver Lodge (born 1851) and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1858-1930) will be known to posterity as propagandists and writers rather than investigators. It is true that Sir Oliver has sat with some famous mediums (Palladino, Mrs. Piper, Hope, Mrs. Duncan, etc.), but it was the publication of his book *Raymond* in 1916 that made him famous the world over as a great spiritualist as well as a great physicist. 'Raymond' was his son who was killed in the Great War and the story of his 'return' through various mediums (Mrs. Piper, Mrs. Leonard, Vout Peters and others), first published when the emotional stress due to the war was at its height, must have been the means of con-

<sup>1</sup> S.P.R. *Proc.*, Vol. VIII, p. 308.

verting thousands to the belief in survival. After *Raymond* came several works on spiritualism,<sup>1</sup> and Lodge, owing to his scientific status, must be regarded as the greatest propagandist for spiritualism of the twentieth century. Sir Oliver, like A. R. Wallace, could not always tell the difference between a 'phenomenon' and a conjuring trick. David Devant tells<sup>2</sup> us how on one occasion he performed a clever 'billet reading' trick on the stage and Sir Oliver afterwards refused to believe either Nevil Maskelyne or Devant that it *was* a trick.

Conan Doyle, sincere, lovable, credulous, was a propagandist of a different type. He made no pretence to studying phenomena from the scientific angle. As a young man he was interested in psychical research. In 1887, in a letter to *Light*,<sup>3</sup> he describes some telepathic experiments he was making and he remarks that he could no more doubt the existence of the phenomena than he could 'doubt the existence of lions in Africa.' So it is apparent that his concern with the subject of survival was not the result of the wave of emotionalism which swept the world after the Great War, as so many people imagine. But it was immediately after the war that he became an active propagandist and during the ten years from 1920 until his death, he lectured in Australasia, the United States, South Africa and Northern Europe. His tours brought him money, but it is probable that, owing to his activities in the cause of spiritualism, he was thousands of pounds out of pocket. He sat with many mediums, some of whom deceived him. Thoroughly honest himself, he could not imagine his too sympathetic credulity being imposed upon. My own relations with Doyle varied from month to month. When I was not exposing his mediums, his letters to me were full of praise for my efforts in interesting scientific orthodoxy in psychical research. One of his last letters to me was an invitation to take shares in a company to run his 'psychic bookshop' (in Victoria Street, Westminster), over which he lost a lot of money. He told me it hurt him very much to have to leave the S.P.R. in such a violent manner, and it is to be regretted that his death prevented any reconciliation. Active to the last, it was only a few days before he died that he headed a deputation (July 1, 1930) to the Home Secretary in an attempt to make the law easier for mediums. His spiritualistic activities added to his literary output and he published nearly twenty works on the subject that was so dear to him. His ridiculous book on the 'fairies'<sup>4</sup> lost him prestige, even among his own followers, and was a great blunder.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix D.

<sup>2</sup> *Windsor Magazine*, December 1935, pp. 118-9.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. VII, July 2, 1887, p. 303.

<sup>4</sup> *The Coming of the Fairies*, London, 1922.

<sup>5</sup> For a 'life' of Doyle, see *Arthur Conan Doyle*, by John Lamond, London, 1931. For his own reminiscences and early struggles, see *Memories and Adventures*, London, 1924 (and Boston, Mass., 1924).



Other propagandists who have influenced spiritualism are the Rev. Stainton Moses (1839-92), the medium who wrote under the pseudonym of 'M.A., Oxon'; Dennis Bradley (1878-1934); Stanley De Brath (1854-1937); J. Hewat McKenzie (1870-1929), the founder of the British College of Psychic Science; and the Rev. G. Vale Owen (1869-1931). Vale Owen's articles on 'spirit life' in the *Weekly Dispatch*, published at the height of the excitement caused by the Great War, must have converted thousands to spiritualism.

William T. Stead (1849-1912), founder of the *Review of Reviews* and *Borderland* (a quarterly review), approached spiritualism as a journalist and publicized the movement in various directions. He was an automatic writer, his alleged 'control' being the spirit of a girl named Julia. Subsequently, he opened (1909) a 'Julia's Bureau,' where, through a band of mediums, inquirers obtained information from the spirit world. After he was lost in the *Titanic* disaster, his daughter Estelle carried on his work.

#### SCIENTIFIC WRITERS

As an antidote to the spate of unconvincing spiritistic literature which has swayed—and almost swamped—the public mind during the past fifty years, the work of Andrew Lang (1844-1912) was a timely corrective. With a scientific care for detail and a gift for presenting a case in an interesting form, his writings on psychic subjects were the most impartial contributions ever presented to the layman. It can truthfully be said that his influence on psychical research was profound, and his contributions to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (11th Edition) are the best which have ever appeared in any similar work. Dreams, ghosts, magic, myths, religion were all popularized by his pen. From the psychical angle, his *Maid of France*<sup>1</sup> and *Cock Lane and Common Sense*<sup>2</sup> are two outstanding works. Curiously enough, he did not consider the Cock Lane 'ghost' the complete swindle which public opinion imagines it to be. He was elected President of the S.P.R. in 1911.

Other British writers and investigators who have helped to make modern psychical research are Dr. Walter J. Kilner (1847-1920), who claimed to have discovered the human aura;<sup>3</sup> Dr. W. J. Crawford (d. 1920), the investigator of the 'Goligher Circle,' and the propounder of a 'cantilever theory' explaining the dynamics of telekinesis;<sup>4</sup> Dr. E. E. Fournier D'Albe,<sup>5</sup> who

<sup>1</sup> London, 1908.

<sup>2</sup> London, 1894.

<sup>3</sup> *The Human Atmosphere, or the Aura Made Visible by the Aid of Chemical Screens*, London, 1911.

<sup>4</sup> For his works, see Bibliography, Appendix D.

<sup>5</sup> *The Goligher Circle*, London, 1922.

failed to confirm Crawford's results with Kathleen Goligher; C. Lloyd Tuckey; F. Bligh Bond (*b.* 1864), who discovered the lost chapels of Glastonbury Abbey by psychic means;<sup>1</sup> and John William Dunne, whose *An Experiment with Time*<sup>2</sup> and *The Serial Universe*<sup>3</sup> have provided psychists with some startling theories concerning dreams, precognition, etc.

I cannot close this section of British writers and experimenters without mentioning the work of Dr. E. J. Dingwall, formerly Research Officer of the British and American Societies for Psychical Research; Professor W. McDougall (1871-1938), Prof. F. C. S. Schiller (1864-1937), Dr. William Brown, Prof. C. D. Broad, Dr. C. E. M. Joad, S. G. Soal, Dr. Julian Huxley, Dr. R. J. Tillyard (1881-1937), W. R. Bousfield (*b.* 1854), the Hon. Everard Feilding (1869-1936) and the Rev. Herbert Thurston, S.J. (*b.* 1856). The two last-named represent the Roman Catholic interest in scientific psychical research, and Father Thurston's informative and entertaining contributions to the *Month* and other journals are well known.

#### AMERICAN INVESTIGATORS

If America was the cradle of modern psychic manifestations, it was not the pioneer in scientific investigation. This honour belongs to England, though both here and in the United States there has always been a close alliance between experimenters. We have already seen how Sir William Barrett was responsible for the founding of the American S.P.R. in 1885. Richard Hodgson, too, spent much of his time in America.

The influence of William James (1842-1910), the great American philosopher, on psychical research on both sides of the Atlantic, was profound. He was one of the original members of the American S.P.R., and President of the English Society for two years. The development of Mrs. Piper's mediumship was largely due to him, and he was convinced by her phenomena. The fact that he was the son of the Swedenborgian theologian, Henry James, probably had some bearing on his beliefs.<sup>4</sup> How William James became concerned with psychical research is of interest. As a young man of twenty-seven, and while still a student at Harvard, he was asked by the editor of the Boston *Daily Advertiser* to review Epes Sargent's *Planchette*, a work on spiritualism. The review appeared on March 10, 1869, and from that day James never lost contact with psychics.

<sup>1</sup> See his *Gate of Remembrance*, Oxford, 1918, and other works.

<sup>2</sup> London, 1927.

<sup>3</sup> London, 1934.

<sup>4</sup> See *The Thought and Character of William James*, by R. B. Perry, New York, 1935.

According to James Hervey Hyslop (1854-1920), William James 'returned' after his death and he tells the story in *Contact with the Other World*.<sup>1</sup> Professor Hyslop was one of the enthusiasts who kept the American S.P.R. alive in its early days. He was a prolific writer and keen investigator, and American psychical research owes much to him. He, too, is alleged to have 'returned,' according to his secretary, Miss Gertrude Ogden Tubby.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Morton Prince (1855-1929) of the Tufts Medical School and editor of the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* made important contributions to the study of abnormal psychology, multiple personality and hystero-somnambulant subjects. His account<sup>3</sup> of the case of Miss Beauchamp has become a classic.

A namesake, Dr. Walter Franklin Prince (1863-1934) is also best known for his 'Doris Fischer' case,<sup>4</sup> in which five personalities possessed the young woman. Prince, originally a clergyman of the Episcopal Church in New York, entered psychics in 1909, and (1917-1925) was associated with the American S.P.R. He was its Research Officer for some years. He later (1925) was instrumental in founding the Boston S.P.R. and was its Research Officer and Editor until his death. Amongst his chief works is the record<sup>5</sup> of the amazing automatic utterances of Mrs. John H. Curran, of St. Louis, Mo., whose alleged spirit entity, 'Patience Worth,' communicated volumes of prose and poetry.

Another outstanding American psychist is Hereward Carrington, who has devoted his life to the study and recording of abnormal phenomena. Of the many mediums with whom he has experimented may be mentioned Eusapia Palladino. With Feilding and Baggally he visited (1908) Naples to test the woman and was convinced of her paranormal phenomena.<sup>6</sup> Of his very many books, most are written in a popular strain. In 1920 he founded the American Psychical Institute and in 1924 was asked to serve on the abortive *Scientific American* committee which inquired into the 'Margery' mediumship.

It was the *Scientific American's* interest in psychic phenomena which resulted in J. Malcolm Bird, an associate editor of that journal, accepting the post of Research Officer (1925-1931) of the American S.P.R. He followed Dr. W. F. Prince, and devoted much of his time to the investigation of 'Margery's' mediumship. Other American investigators who have a claim on the reader's attention are Henry Steel Olcott, the Theosophist; Edward Caleb Randall, Professor John Edgar Coover, Professor Gardner Murphy, Dr. Joseph Banks Rhine, and Dr. Alexis Carrel (*b.* 1873), member of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research (and

<sup>1</sup> London [1919].

<sup>2</sup> See her *James H. Hyslop*, York, Pa., 1929.

<sup>3</sup> *The Dissociation of a Personality*, New York, 1906.

<sup>4</sup> See *Proc.*, Am. S.P.R., Vols. IX-XI, New York, 1915-17.

<sup>5</sup> *The Case of Patience Worth*, Boston S.P.R., 1927.

<sup>6</sup> See his *Eusapia Palladino and her Phenomena*, London [1910].

Nobel prize-winner, 1912). His brilliant essay, *Man, the Unknown*,<sup>1</sup> is a landmark in psychical research. Though a Roman Catholic and an eminent scientist, Dr. Carrel accepts telepathy, clairvoyance, and spiritual healing (Lourdes, etc.), and insists that scientific orthodoxy shall investigate the phenomena.

#### FRENCH SCEPTICISM

As a nation, the French are the most sceptical, and French scientists are the least easy to convince of the occurrence of paranormal phenomena. But there are some notable exceptions, the chief of whom was Professor Charles Richet (1850-1935), the great physiologist. He sat with many mediums and his experiences are related in his *Traité de Métapsychique*<sup>2</sup> (Paris, 1922). He has been called the 'Father of Metapsychics' with considerable truth. His is the outstanding personality in French psychical research. Though it is often claimed that he died a spiritualist, this is not so. Just before his death he told the present writer that he did not believe in 'survival.' Richet's interest in psychics was due partly to the work of E. A. Albert de Rochas d'Aiglun (1837-1914), who devoted much time to experimenting with 'human radiations,' hypnosis, etc.; and Dr. Paul Joire, whose researches were in the same field. The work of d'Aiglun and Joire was continued by Hippolyte Baraduc and Emil Boirac. The former invented an instrument (the Biometer) said to register human psychic radiations. It is curious that the subject of human radiations or emanations has always attracted French investigators. In addition to the names I have mentioned, G. de Fontenay, Dr. Joseph Maxwell, Professor Blondlot, Dr. Jules Regnault, Dr. Louis Favre and several others claimed to have recorded a certain 'vital force' externalized by human beings.

The great French astronomer, Camille Flammarion (1842-1925), was a spiritualist and wrote many books on the subject. He was a follower of 'Allen Kardec'<sup>3</sup> (1804-1869), the reincarnationist, and accepted the phenomena of many doubtful mediums, including the conjuring Davenport Brothers. Curiously enough, he was President (1923) of the British S.P.R. and his Presidential Address<sup>4</sup> makes astonishing reading.

Other noted Frenchmen who have contributed something to psychical research are Dr. Paul Gibier (1851-1900), Alfred Binet, Pierre Janet, Gabriel Delanne, A. Rouhier (whose researches into hallucinating plants and drugs are well known),

<sup>1</sup> New York and London [1935].

<sup>2</sup> Eng. trans.: *Thirty Years of Psychical Research*, London, 1923.

<sup>3</sup> i.e., H. L. D. Rivail.

<sup>4</sup> *Proc.*, S.P.R., Vol. XXXIV, pp. 1-27, 1923.

and the eminent philosopher, Henri (Louis) Bergson (b. 1859), who was President of the British S.P.R. in 1913.

Of the more active workers, Dr. Gustave Geley (1868-1924) was a spiritualist, but did much for psychical research. His friend, Jean Meyer,<sup>1</sup> founded the Institut Métapsychique International and the Maison des Spirites, and Geley was first director of the former institution. He experimented with Eva C., the Polish physical mediums, Guzik (who deceived him) and Kluski, and others. He exposed Erto, the Italian 'luminous' medium. He was killed in an airplane accident over Warsaw, and his successor at the Institut was Dr Eugène Osty, another medical practitioner. Friend and collaborator with Geley, the scientist René Sudre is to-day the principal psychist in France. His *Introduction à la Métapsychique Humaine* (Paris, 1926) is the work of a brilliant thinker and one of the outstanding books of the century.

#### GERMAN PARAPSYCHOLOGY

German psychical research and Albert Freiherr von Schrenck-Notzing (1862-1929) are synonymous, and it is due to this great investigator that science has been able to witness genuine physical phenomena. Of course, I refer to Willi and Rudi Schneider, the Austrian mediums, the development of whom was Schrenck's chief work. More than one hundred Continental savants testified to the genuineness of their phenomena. Other mediums whom he tested were Eva C., Stanisława P., Stanisława Tomczyk, Kluski, Linda Gazzera, Eusapia Palladino, and many more. He was a most prolific writer and his death was a great blow to psychical research all over the world, coming as it did immediately after that of Karl Krall (1864-1929), the trainer of the famous 'Elberfeld horses.'

Contemporary with Schrenck was the engineer, Fritz Grunewald (d. 1925). He devoted his life to the devising of apparatus for the testing of phenomena, which he used with various mediums. His laboratory in Charlottenburg, Berlin, was a veritable museum of recording instruments, and much of the modern investigating technique is due to Grunewald. With me, he tested such psychics as Guzik and Eleonore Zugun, and others.

Contemporaries of Grunewald were Professor Karl Grüber (1881-1927), who sat with me many times with the Schneider boys; Professor Konstantin Oesterreich of Tübingen, Dr. Paul Sünner, Dr. Richard Baerwald, Dr. Ehrich Bohn, Professor Christoph Schröder, Dr. Rudolph Tischner, and General Josef Peter (1852-1939).

Other distinguished Germans who have contributed to psychical research include Professor J. C. F. Zöllner (1834-82),

<sup>1</sup> Died April 13, 1931.

Baron Carl du Prel (1839-99), Dr. Edward von Hartmann, Dr. Albert Moll, Hugo Münsterberg, Professor Max Dessoir, Professor Hans Driesch (*b.* 1867), and Dr. Hans Bender of Bonn. In concluding this section of German investigators, I must mention those arch-sceptics, Graf Carl von Klinckowstroem, Hans Rosenbusch and W. von Gulat-Wellenburg, who have written largely on the negative side of psychical research. Of German-speaking countries, Austria has given us Professors Hans Thirring (who was responsible for my investigation of Eleonore Zugun), Stefan Meyer and Karl Przibram (all of Vienna); and Professors Franz Haslinger and Daniel Walter (both of Graz). Kapitän Fritz Kogelnik, of Braunau-am-Inn 'discovered' the Schneider boys.

#### ITALIAN BELIEF

If the French are the most sceptical concerning psychic phenomena, the Italians are the least. Most of the Italian scientists who investigated became spiritualists. One of the earliest to accept survival was Professor Cesare Lombroso (1836-1909), the psychiatrist. A contemporary spiritualist was Professor Marco Tullio Falcomer, whose experiments with Florrie Cook are well known.<sup>1</sup> Another academic spiritualist was Professor Enrico Morselli (1852-1929), who sat with Eusapia Palladino.

Other Italian scientific experimenters include Dr. Giovanni Battista Ermacora (1869-98); Enrico Imoda, who sat with Linda Gazzera;<sup>2</sup> Professor P. B. Bianchi, Professor Angelo Brofferio, Ercole Chiaia, Professor Philippe Bottazzi, Augusto Tamburini, and Dr. Rocco Santoliquido (1854-1930), who was to Italy what Schrenck was to Germany. Santoliquido was partly instrumental in founding the Institut Métapsychique in Paris, where he resided for many years. For ten years he was the President of the Institut.

Modern living Italian psychists include Ernesto Bozzano (*b.* 1862), spiritualist and researcher; Professor Giovanni Pioli, Milan; Professor Lidio Cipriani, University of Florence; Professor Emanuele Sorge, University of Naples (who asked me to test Ertò, the 'luminous' medium); Dr. William McKenzie, Genoa; Cesare Baudi di Vesme (1862-1938); and Professor Ferdinando Cazzamalli of Como, who has devoted himself to the study of alleged cerebral emanations. Professors Fabio Vitali, G. C. Trabacchi, and Sante de Sanctis investigated (1934) the luminous phenomena of Anna Monaro. Quite recently (1937) a new organization, the Società Italiana di Metapsichica, has been

<sup>1</sup> See his *Intorno alla Medianità di Mrs. Florence Cook Corner*, Genoa, *n.d.*

<sup>2</sup> See his *Fotografie di Fantasmi*, Turin, 1912.

founded in Rome in memory of Richet, and is governed by a 'Comitato di Presidenza,' comprising Professor Cazzamalli, Dr. Luigi Romolo Sanguineti, Professor Giovanni Schepis and Dr. Emilio Servadio.

#### DISTINGUISHED EUROPEAN INVESTIGATORS

Poland, home of mediums, has produced at least one great psychical researcher—Dr. Julien Ochorowicz (1850–1918). Champion of such physical mediums as Stanisława Tomczyk and Eusapia Palladino, his experiments with these subjects and in the field of paranormal photography are important. Alexander N. Aksakov (1832–1903), another great experimenter, was Russia's principal exponent of parapsychology and spiritualism and worked in Russia, England and other parts of Europe. He wrote and translated many works and sat with the principal mediums of the day (D. D. Home, Madame d'Espérance, Eusapia, Slade, Eglinton and others). He bequeathed nearly £4,000 to the British S.P.R. Another Russian, W. Bechterew, the famous physiologist, carried out some important experiments with 'telepathic' dogs.<sup>1</sup>

Professor Theodor Flournoy (*d.* 1920), a psychologist in the University of Geneva, is best known for his *Des Indes à la Planète Mars*,<sup>2</sup> a monograph on the famous case of 'Hélène Smith' (*i.e.*, Catherine Élise Muller), the 'Mars Medium.' Other Swiss investigators include Professor Marc Thury (1822–1905) and Professor Eugen Bleuler, of Zürich.

Scandinavia has given us Professor Sydney Alrutzy (1868–1925) of Uppsala University; Professor Chr. Winther of Copenhagen; and the Norwegians, Professor Jaeger and Dr. Thorstein Wereide who is the present editor of the Oslo *Psykisk Tidsskrift*. Dr. Winther's monograph<sup>3</sup> on Anna Rasmussen is one of the most convincing arguments for the reality of physical phenomena. Finally, Iceland is represented by Professor Haraldur Nielsson (*d.* 1928), and Professor Gudmundur Hannesson, both of Reykjavik. Professor Einar Hjörleifsson Kvaran (1859–1938), the well-known writer, founded the Icelandic Society for Psychical Research in 1918.<sup>4</sup>

In Holland, the best known experimenters are Professors Henri Brugmans and Gerardus Heymans (who conducted the famous experiments in telepathy at the University of Groningen); and Dr. P. A. Dietz (Leiden) and Dr. W. H. C. Tenhaeff

<sup>1</sup> *Zeitschrift für Psychotherapie und Medizinische Psychologie*, Vol. 8, 1924.

<sup>2</sup> Paris and Geneva, 1900.

<sup>3</sup> 'Experimental Inquiries into Telekinesis,' *Journal*, Am. S.P.R., N.Y., January–May, 1928.

<sup>4</sup> For an account of his life and work, see *Light*, June 30, 1938.

(Utrecht), the editors of *Tijdschrift Voor Parapsychologie*. Though hardly a psychical researcher, Count Maurice Maeterlinck (b. 1862), the Belgian author, has done much to popularize psychics in his various works, especially in *Death*,<sup>1</sup> *Our Eternity*,<sup>2</sup> and *The Unknown Guest*,<sup>3</sup> in which he gives his experiences with the 'talking' horses of Elberfeld, etc.

The Far East has contributed little to psychical research, but at least one investigator, Professor T. Fukurai of Tokio, studied parapsychology both in his native country and in England (where he sat with Hope, etc.) and published the result of his work.<sup>4</sup> Nearer home, Professor Voreas and Dr. Angelos Tanagras are working at Athens, where there is a flourishing Société des Recherches Psychiques Hellénique.

## APPENDIX B

### THE FIRST PSYCHIC, LABORATORY

IT was Huxley who reminded us that science is nothing but trained and organized common sense. That this uncommon commodity is often lacking in the investigation of alleged abnormal phenomena is only too apparent to those engaged in serious psychical research. The work of great psychists like Barrett, Crookes and Richet is convincing only because we know that their methods and records are those of the trained and scientific worker. The most convinced spiritualist will, I am sure, be the first to admit that much of the work of the old-time investigators is valueless owing to the inadequacy of their methods and the incompleteness—or total lack of—detailed records. Some spiritualists affect to despise the scientific side of the subject, but it is noticeable that whenever their leaders wish to appear convincing, either on the platform or in print, they invariably fall back on the scientist and scientific experiments for their proofs and evidence. Even the Roman Catholic Church is not averse to the scientist putting his *cachet* on the miracles of Lourdes and similar manifestations. In a speech<sup>5</sup> the Pope said that the Church did not fear scientific investigation with regard to miracles; on the contrary, such help was welcomed.

<sup>1</sup> London, 1911.

<sup>2</sup> London, 1913.

<sup>3</sup> London, 1914.

<sup>4</sup> *Clairvoyance and Thoughtography*, London, 1931.

<sup>5</sup> Reported in the *Daily Express*, March 30, 1926.



## FOUNDING OF THE NATIONAL LABORATORY OF PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

At the close of the Great War it was obvious that something would have to be done to combat the machinations of the horde of charlatans who were battenning on the bereaved, the credulous, and the uncritical. To this end, I decided to establish a laboratory in London where the miracle-mongers could be tested and the genuine medium encouraged. The main object of the laboratory was to investigate in a dispassionate manner, and by purely scientific means, every phase of psychic or alleged psychic phenomena—uninfluenced by the emotionalism of spiritualism on the one hand, and the ‘philosophic doubt’ of the orthodox scientist (especially the physicist) on the other. It was decided to place the evidence obtained, whether good or bad, before such members of the public as were interested in the subject. Starting with no preconceived theories—scientific, philosophical, or religious—the Council of the Laboratory endeavoured to ascertain and demonstrate the laws underlying psychic or abnormal manifestations. Personally, I was determined to bring psychical research to the notice of orthodoxy, and my great ambition was to establish a department of psychical research at London University.

The first work of the Laboratory was carried out in 1923, in a house in Queen Square, Bloomsbury. The first ‘subject’ was Miss Stella C., whose phenomena made psychic history.<sup>1</sup> During the examination of this young woman it was found that our equipment and apparatus were not sufficient for the many experiments we wished to carry out, and I decided to lease a suite of rooms which I could fit out with every scientific and automatic recording instrument which experience suggested might be useful to us. I found suitable accommodation in Queensberry Place, South Kensington, and on January 1, 1926, we opened the doors of the only properly-equipped psychic laboratory in the world to those researchers who cared to use it. The apparatus, furniture, instruments, tools, etc., were valued at £3,000. In February, 1931, the Laboratory was moved to larger premises at 13 Roland Gardens, South Kensington, where it remained until March, 1937, when, upon the termination of our lease, the equipment, library, etc., were transferred to the University of London.

## THE SÉANCE-ROOM

For the guidance of those who wish to establish university departments of psychical research, some account of the rooms and

<sup>1</sup> See *Stella C.*, by Harry Price, op. cit.

equipment of the National Laboratory (now the University of London Council for Psychical Investigation) is necessary.

The Laboratory suite comprised the following rooms: office, chemical and physical laboratory, séance-room and library, dark room, workshop, large hall, and usual domestic offices. (See Plate XIV.)

The séance-room measured 22 feet 7 inches long, by 15 feet 7 inches wide, by 9 feet 9 inches in height. It had two doors, one leading into the workshop, the second giving access to the entrance hall. Both of these doors could be locked and sealed.

One of the recesses formed by the chimney-stack was extended, on the ceiling, by means of a semi-circular rail, and from this rail was suspended by means of pulleys and roller-bearings a pair of red plush curtains weighing 14 pounds. This formed the traditional 'cabinet,' roomy and comfortable, in which a medium could sit in an arm-chair, the curtains completely concealing him. The measurements of the cabinet were: width, 6 feet 3 inches; height, 9 feet 9 inches; depth, 3 feet 3 inches; depth of sides, 2 feet.

The floor of the séance-room (in common with the other rooms of the Laboratory) was covered with three-eighths inch natural cork carpet, which is a bad conductor of heat, and thus keeps the room at an equable temperature. The cork is pleasant to the feet and clean, and forms a good background for anything that may form there.

The lighting arrangements were somewhat elaborate and every provision was made for various forms of illumination. Ultra-violet and infra-red installations were available and X-ray apparatus was at hand, if necessary. The normal white lighting was by means of a central pendant holding two 100-watt bulbs. By the turn of a switch, these could be converted into bright ruby illumination, supplied by two 25-watt red bulbs. This light was useful for photographic work during a séance.

The illumination of a séance could be accomplished in many ways, and by various flood-lights, including coloured filters or screens in special 'lanterns' or inverted ceiling lights constructed by the Wratten Division of Messrs. Kodak, Ltd. The entire series of Wratten filters or 'safelights' were employed in two sizes, 12 × 10 inches, and 10 × 8 inches. The most commonly used were: Series 0, pale orange; series 1, deep orange; series 2, deep red; series 3, a special 'neutral' light, a combination of orange and green tints, which we used for panchromatic or auto-chrome plates, or cinematographic films. By using a 60-watt new gas-filled electric bulb with each of these flood-lights and filters, it was possible to keep constant and to standardize the lighting of a séance, so that the exact illumination could be duplicated at future experiments. All these lights were controlled by rheostats or dimmers. Six lighting plugs and two power plugs were available for the various lamps and instruments.

For heating the room, a 1,000-watt electrical radiator, with enclosed elements which converted water into superheated steam, could be used, the fins heating by convection. A thermostat automatically regulated the heat, which thus remained constant. The séance-room also contained a fireplace permanently blocked by a metal plate and a large gas-fire. A large window at one end of the room could be screened by an opaque, black rubberized spring blind, the edges of which were masked by a felt-lined 'box' which entirely surrounded the window. These spring roller-blinds are used extensively for X-ray work in large hospitals. The system is an ideal one for a séance-room which can be made absolutely dark in a few seconds.

A number of photographic and ciné cameras, dictaphones, time-clock, etc., were at hand for recording purposes and a cabinet gramophone and musical boxes supplied such music as was required by the medium. Bookcases lined the walls of the room (giving the place a homely and comfortable appearance), and the usual chairs, table, etc., were available for the sitters. A large settee was used for experiments in hypnosis. A special teak note-taker's table, on pentagraph rubber wheels, supported dictaphones (for recording or note-taking), rheostats, luminous watch for timing, etc. Transmitting thermographs, barographs, and other instruments were installed for recording the meteorological conditions. A special instrument which I adapted for séance purposes is a time-clock which indicates the exact duration of a phenomenon. The system is an electrical one. The movement of a special 24-hour clock is so constructed that a red bulb is caused to glow at regular intervals, of  $\frac{1}{2}$ , 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 seconds, according to the setting. By the turn of a switch a buzzer or bell can be operated instead of the light. By placing the clock in a convenient position in the line of sight of a person noting the manifestations, the precise duration of a phenomenon can be accurately determined. A special note-taker's lamp reflected a red light from below *through the paper* which was being written on, no extraneous light escaping into the séance-room. Another special piece of apparatus was the fraud-proof double cage table, used for testing telekinetic mediums.

#### CHEMICAL AND PHYSICAL LABORATORY

The laboratory belonging to the organization was a well-lighted front room, 17 feet 4 inches by 16 feet 4 inches, with two large windows. Wall benches round all four sides of the apartment, with cupboards beneath, afforded excellent working space for experiments. Bunsen and other gas-burners were attached to connections at various points. Batteries of electric bulbs could be used to regulate the lighting of the room, and power and

lighting plugs were spaced round the walls at regular intervals. Over the benches were shelves for bottles, instruments, etc. A 4 feet 6 inches square teak laboratory table and six chairs completed the furniture. The laboratory could be converted into a large dark room by erecting special shutters, impervious to light, over the windows.

Every chemical likely to be required in photography or psychical research was available, and we were the happy possessors of several pounds of radio-active red, green, and yellow sulphide of zinc (which I purchased from Poulenc Frères of Paris), used for making luminous paint. Our stock probably exceeded that held by any institution in Great Britain. Glass-blowing apparatus, laboratory glass-ware, graduated measures, and the hundred-and-one pieces of apparatus which go to make a well-equipped laboratory were to be found in our rooms.

The special equipment of the laboratory included an electric heater for melting wax, etc., chemical balances, electroscopes, galvanometers, barographs, thermographs and other thermometers for measuring temperatures, a fraud-proof control for 'voice mediums,' an air-tester for recording the circulation of the air, and an extensive broadcasting equipment complete with microphones. A large copper still provided all the distilled water needed for photographic and other purposes. An assortment of luminous objects, musical toys, isolation chambers (for telekinetic phenomena) and other special apparatus (such as were used for the Marion experiments in hyperæsthesia<sup>1</sup>) were kept in the laboratory. For photographic purposes, a 500-watt spotlight, with filters, and a 1,000-watt flood-lamp were used. For photographing in a dull light, infra-red lamps and filters (for use with infra-red films and plates) were employed. For ultra-violet illumination, a quartz mercury-vapour lamp, in special steel cabinet, with window for filters, was erected. For certain experiments, complete X-ray apparatus was installed and there were two battery-chargers (for both A.C. and D.C.). Automatic flash-light apparatus and Vaku-Blitz bulbs were used for photographing during a séance.

#### OPTICAL EQUIPMENT

The optical equipment of the laboratory was particularly complete. There were fifteen cameras of various sizes, including stereoscopic, reflex, and cinematographic. These last-named included Zeiss 35-mm. and Bell and Howell 16-mm. instruments, together with their respective projectors, and reeling and splicing equipment. Three photographic enlargers (one vertical automatic) belonged to this section. Five stereoscopes (including a

<sup>1</sup> Illustrated in *Confessions of a Ghost-Hunter* (Plates opposite pp. 266 and 276).

semi-automatic 'Taxiphote' instrument for  $45 \times 107$  mm. positives) by Zeiss and other makers were in the collection.

The Laboratory possessed four microscopes (binocular and monocular) with batteries of Zeiss and Leitz oculars and objectives (including apochromatic), an automatic microtome for cutting sections, and the usual mounter's cabinet, lamps, specimen cabinets, etc., used in microscopy. Some interesting discoveries concerning the composition of 'teleplasm' were made with these instruments.<sup>1</sup>

For our lectures and demonstrations, both ciné projectors and optical lanterns were used. The latter included an 'Optiscope' (a perfect instrument with many refinements) and an epidiascope for projecting pictures of solid objects. The necessary silver and other screens were, of course, part of the equipment. Many other optical instruments were used from time to time, and for 'scryers' we had five crystals, including a 5-inch flawless quartz sphere, true in every diameter to .001 inch.

#### WORKSHOP AND DARK ROOM

The uninitiated, when viewing for the first time the workshop attached to the laboratory, often expressed surprise that tools could possibly be used in psychical research. When it was pointed out to them that the construction, maintenance, and repair of apparatus, instruments, cameras, electrical equipment, etc., needed every kind of tool, they realized the utility of the workshop, which was in almost daily use.

The workshop attached to the laboratory contained every tool and gauge necessary for the construction and maintenance of scientific apparatus. Turning, brazing, casting, forging, grinding, polishing, etc., could all be carried out in the workshop by a competent person. Two lathes were installed. The larger, a  $4\frac{1}{2}$ -inch screw-cutting model, with 6-foot gap bed, was capable of handling really big work. It could be driven by power or treadle. The smaller tool was a 'Lorch' lathe for fine precision work. Sets of wood-turning and wood-carving tools could be used with the large lathe. Every size and type of screw could be made or duplicated by one of the lathes or sets of stocks and dies.

The fittings of the workshop included a strong bench, three vices, and every kind of tool. Sets of shelves and cupboards contained stocks of screws, plugs, wire, electrical odds and ends, gauges, and new material. Gas and electric power were installed for the forge, brazing jet, soldering stove, etc.

The dark-room contained the usual lead-lined sink; bench;

<sup>1</sup> See 'The Microscopic Anatomy of the Albuminoid Type of Duncan "Teleplasm"', by Harry Price, *Bulletin* I, Nat. Lab. Psychical Research, London, 1931, pp. 87-95.

various copper electric lamps for ordinary and panchromatic photography; automatic alarm clocks for timing development or enlargements; stocks of photographic chemicals; more than a hundred glass and porcelain dishes and tanks; graduated measures, automatic washing tanks and drying cupboards, exposure meters and filters; printing frames and guillotines; stocks of plates and papers, and an automatic lantern-slide maker. The window was screened by an X-ray spring blind running in boxes, similar to the one in the séance-room, already described.

#### A 'PSYCHIC' MUSEUM

I must add that in connection with the National Laboratory there was a small museum of objects used by mediums; specimens of 'teleplasm' (composed of white of egg and similar substances); fake 'apports,' odds and ends of apparatus used for 'phenomena,' and two dictaphone records of a 'Martian love song' and a 'Martian symphonic chant' recorded through the 'Martian medium,' Mrs. St. John James. Other 'museum pieces' were some 'psychic lights' as used by the medium in the Rue Christine, Ostend; a bunch of 'psychic roses' (purchased by the medium in Edgware Road); and an assortment of mediums' 'confessions.'

The only laboratory apartment I have not described is the office, a small room containing the usual equipment and the card catalogue of my library<sup>1</sup> of some 16,000 volumes on psychical research, magic, and conjuring; a collection of many hundreds of lantern slides, negatives, and the archives of the laboratory.

I have now said enough to give the reader an insight into the scope, work, and research equipment of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research. The accompanying photographs will help to give some idea of the general appearance of the principal rooms of the organization. It has been suggested that such a full equipment is not necessary for the investigation of phenomena, but in practice we found that every piece of apparatus, tool, etc., was used at some time or other, in the examination of some medium. The choice of equipment was based on research records of the past fifty years. I drew up a list of the instruments, etc., which *should have* been used—but which were not—and decided to house them under one roof. Many mediums have failed to pass our instrumental and scientific tests; a few have succeeded. I will now give a list of those mediums whom I examined (and place where investigated) during my Directorship of the National Laboratory, from 1923 until the Laboratory was taken over by the University of London Council for Psychical Investigation on June 6, 1934.

<sup>1</sup> Now the 'Harry Price Library of Magical Literature' in the University of London.

## PRINCIPAL MEDIUMS INVESTIGATED

*Physical mediums.*—Jean Guzik (Warsaw); Stella C. (London); Willi Schneider (Munich, London, Braunau, Vienna); Rudi Schneider (Braunau, Munich, London); Stanislaw P. (Warsaw); William Hope, 'spirit' photographer (London); George Moss, 'spirit' photographer (London); Maria Silbert (Graz and London); Freda Weisl (Graz); Guy L'Estrange (London); Einer Nielsen (Copenhagen); Anna Rasmussen (Copenhagen); E. M. Sturgess (London); Eleonore Zugun (Vienna and London); Douglas Drew (London); Herbert Dyer (Llanhilleth); 'Margery', i.e., Mrs. L. R. G. Crandon (London); Frederick Munnings (London); Helen Duncan (London); Pasquale Erto (London); Frank Decker (London); Mrs. Henderson (London); Claude Bishop, 'Dolores' (London); Matylda Skrzetuska (London); Laura A. Pruden (London); Harold Evans (London); Mrs. Irving, 'spirit' photographer (London); and Mrs. Carnegie (London).

*Mental mediums.*—Abbé Lambert, dowser (London); George Valiantine (also physical medium) (London); Anna Pilch (Warsaw); Ingeborg Dahl (Fredrikstad, Norway); Mrs. Beatrice Hastings (London); Mrs. St. John James (London); Mrs. Florence Kingstone (London); Mrs. G. M. Laws (London); Vout Peters (London); 'John Alleyne' (London); Mrs. Cannock (London); Mrs. Eileen Garrett (London); Mrs. Claire Cantlon (London); Fräulein Steffi Breicha (London); Mrs. Susannah Harris-Kaye (Los Angeles); Madame Eugénie Picquart (Paris and London); Dr. Arthur Lynch (London); Signora S. (in the Catacombs, Rome); Frau Lotte Plaat (London); Jeanne Laplace (Paris); Frau Liebermann (Hamburg); Mrs. Stahl Wright (London); 'Marion', hyperæsthete (London); Miss Gene Dennis (London); and 'Maloïtz', vaudeville telepathist (London).

## OUR COLLABORATORS

This record of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research would not be complete without the names of those scientists who have collaborated with me as Council members, lecturers, correspondents, sitters and in many other ways. They include: Sir Richard Gregory, Bart., F.R.S.; Professor Dr. William McDougall, F.R.S.; the late Dr. R. J. Tillyard, F.R.S.; Professor Dr. E. W. MacBride, F.R.S.; Lord Rayleigh, F.R.S.; Professor E. N. da C. Andrade, F.R.S.; W. R. Bousfield, F.R.S.; E. Heron-Allen, F.R.S.; Professor Dr. A. O. Rankine, F.R.S.; the late Sir William Barrett, F.R.S.; Professor Dr. Julian Huxley, F.R.S.; Professor Dr. Cyril Burt; Professor Dr. Hans Driesch (Leipzig);

Dr. C. E. M. Joad; Professor Dr. H. Gordon Jackson; Professor Dr. d'Arsonval (Paris); Professor Dr. Hans Thirring (Vienna); Professor Dr. Christian Winther (Copenhagen); Dr. Guy B. Brown; Dr. William Brown; Professor Dr. J. C. Flugel; the late Professor Dr. F. C. S. Schiller; S. G. Soal; Professor Dr. Millais Culpin; Professor Dr. T. K. Oesterreich (Tübingen); Professor Dr. F. Haslinger (Graz); Professor D. Walter (Graz); Dr. A. von Mohr (Göttingen); Dr. E. J. Dingwall; Professor Dr. Giovanni Pioli (Milan); Professor Dr. Eugen Bleuler (Zürich); Professor Dr. C. Schröder (Berlin); Dr. Paul Sünner (Berlin); Professor Dr. Lidio Cipriani (Florence); Professor Dr. Nils von Hofsten (Uppsala); René Sudre (Paris); Professor Dr. F. Cazzamalli (Milan); Professor Dr. F. G. Benedict (Boston, Mass.); the late Professor Dr. Oskar Jaeger (Oslo); Professor E. R. Dodds; Dr. David Efron (Buenos Aires); Professor Dr. Ludwik (Vienna); the late Professor Dr. Karl Gruber (Munich); Professor Dr. J. A. Gunn; Professor Dr. E. Garnett; the late Professor Dr. W. E. Gibbs; William Bacon, B.Sc., F.I.C.; Dr. W. H. C. Tenhaeff (Utrecht); Dr. A. Tanagras (Athens); Professor Dr. Hildebrand (Munich); Professor Dr. A. F. C. Pollard; Professor Dr. Emanuele Sorge (Naples); Dr. Th. Wereide (Oslo); Professor Dr. Adam Zoltowski (Warsaw); Professor Dr. Karl Przibram (Vienna); the late Professor Dr. D. F. Fraser-Harris and Professor Dr. R. F. Alfred Hoernlé (Johannesburg). My thanks are due to these gentlemen for their assistance.

## PUBLICATIONS

The work of the National Laboratory was published in *Proceedings* (1927-9); the *British Journal of Psychological Research* (1926-9); *Bulletins* I-VI (1931-3); and two offprints from *Nature*, July 31, 1926 and August 18, 1928 (articles by Dr. R. J. Tillyard). In addition, the following books dealing with the work done at the Laboratory have been issued. They are all by the present writer: *Stella C.* (London, 1925, and a French edition, Paris, 1926); *Rudi Schneider* (London, 1930, and German and French editions, Leipzig and Paris, 1930); *Leaves from a Psychist's Case-Book* (London, 1933); *Confessions of a Ghost-Hunter* (London and New York, 1936. Translations appeared during 1936-7 in the following countries: Holland, Italy, France, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary and Sweden). Much of the work of the National Laboratory was recorded in the *Journal* of the American Society for Psychical Research, between 1925 and 1931, when I was Foreign Research Officer of this Society. In 1935, the British Movietone News, Ltd., produced a talking film, 'Psychical Research' (dealing with my work at the Laboratory), for which I wrote the script.



As I have stated, in June, 1934, the National Laboratory became the University of London Council for Psychical Investigation. This change was the result of a formal offer which I made to the University of London. The history of this proposal is outlined in Chapter III.

## APPENDIX C

### PSYCHIC PRACTITIONERS (REGULATION) BILL

*(Private Member's Bill)*

#### NOTE

THE purpose of this Bill is to amend the law concerning psychic and occult practices; to regulate the activities of 'those purporting to be, or calling themselves 'mediums'; and to safeguard the public from the frauds of those pretending to possess an occult or psychic faculty, at the same time protecting the genuine medium and the genuine inquirer, and furthering the interests of scientific psychical research.

This Bill is also designed to prohibit the sale of articles and apparatus alleged to induce a psychic or occult faculty and to prevent the sellers of such articles from battenning on the credulity of the public; and to prohibit psychic organizations from living on the earnings of fraudulent mediums. Children and adolescents, too, are protected from being exploited by those seeking to make money out of their alleged 'powers,' the exhibition of which, invariably for gain, can hardly fail to injure, both mentally and physically, and also morally, persons of immature age.

The art of deceiving the public by spurious occult or magical demonstrations is as old as history itself, and the literature of the subject goes back many centuries. The ancient Greek priests made a science of deception, and their temples stand to-day as monuments of charlatanry and artifice far in advance of anything the modern psychic faker dare construct for purposes of deception. Hero of Alexandria exposed these priestly tricksters—who called their assistants sibyls and prophetesses—hundreds of years ago, and gave the world an illustrated account<sup>1</sup> of the working of their

<sup>1</sup> *Spiritualia*, ed. Alex Georgi, Urbino, 1592. For translation, see *The Pneumatics of Hero of Alexandria*, by Bennett Woodcroft, London, 1851.

oracles, their bleeding statues, their talking gods, their fire-spitting and food-consuming idols, and the many mechanical contrivances with which the keepers of the temples deluded their followers. It is still possible to see the siphons, tubes, vaults, secret doors, chambers, and speaking-tubes by means of which they imposed on credulity in ancient Greece. Though the modern 'oracle'—unlike her prototype of Delphi and Dodona—does not now hand out her prophecies enigmatically expressed in hexameter verses, the sayings and automatic writings of some 'mediums' of to-day follow the ancient model in that they require all the interpretation that can be found for them.

#### EARLY LONDON CHARLATANS

Coming to modern historical times, we have records of many charlatans who, by means of a little conjuring skill and a pretence to occult knowledge, easily extracted money from the vacuous guilelessness of the ignorant and credulous. In 1561 Francis Coxe, a wandering magician, 'medium,' and miracle-worker was put in the 'pyllorye in Chepesyde' after being accused of 'certayne sinistral and develish artes.'<sup>1</sup> He was ordered also to 'retract' and confess his fraud in various parts of London. He had the temerity to print his confession under the title of *The Unfained Retraction of Francis Coxe . . .* (London, 1561). Apparently he found that writing tracts was more profitable than telling fortunes, for in the same year he published another black-letter brochure entitled: *A Short Treatise, Declaring the Detestable Wickedness of Magical Sciences as Necromancie, Conjurations, Curious Astrologie*, etc., one of the very earliest exposures of fraudulent mediumship. A few years later Reginald Scot devoted a whole volume<sup>1</sup> to what we should now call fraudulent mediumship, and in 1620 John Melton gave the world a detailed account<sup>2</sup> of how an astrologer robbed him of his money under the pretence of finding lost property. And there are many other early works of a similar nature.

#### WAR INCREASES FRAUD

During and after the Great War, the number of mediums—especially fraudulent mediums—increased considerably, and the reason for this is not difficult to understand. The wave of emotionalism which swept the world during this unhappy period caused the bereaved to seek their dead ones, made people more credulous and more easily duped, and the charlatans rose to the occasion. This extraordinary credulity on the part of the public

<sup>1</sup> *Discoverie of Witchcraft*. . . . London, 1584.

<sup>2</sup> *Astrologaster, or the Figure-Caster*. . . . London, 1620.

has persisted and is growing. Legislation in order to protect these persons is therefore necessary.

One of the crying scandals connected with false mediumship is the fact that when a medium is prosecuted and convicted on the clearest evidence, many spiritualists regard him as a sort of martyr and rush to his support. More than one 'medium' has leapt to fame solely on account of his having been convicted of a mean 'psychic' fraud. It is necessary to protect the public from such people, and from their own folly in consulting these charlatans.

Briefly, the Bill is intended to provide for the registration of persons claiming psychic powers, with or without examination by some competent, sympathetic body, at the same time to leave the miracle-monger who lives on the credulous, the ignorant, and the bereaved, punishable under existing law. Under the Bill, any *bond-fide* society pursuing scientific research into psychic matters may obtain recognition from the Secretary of State as 'a recognized Scientific Body.'

# Psychic Practitioners (Regulation) Bill

## A BILL

To provide for the regulation of psychic or occult practitioners: to restrict the public exhibition of psychic faculties: to confer on the Secretary of State powers in relation to the registration of persons professing to possess such faculties: to make provision for preventing fraud in connection with psychic or occult practices and for the protection of children and young persons: to repeal the Witchcraft Act, 1735, and to amend the Vagrancy Act, 1824: and to provide for purposes connected with the matters aforesaid.

## PSYCHIC PRACTITIONERS (REGULATION) BILL

## ARRANGEMENT OF CLAUSES

*Registration, etc.*

## CLAUSE

1. Provisions as to psychic practitioners, meetings, and literature.
2. Establishment of registers.
3. Applications for registration.
4. Particulars and notices.
5. Grant and extent of registration: certificates.
6. Power of Registration Authority to impose conditions and require undertakings.
7. Refusal and cancellation of registration.

*Offences*

8. Offences.
9. Penalties for offences.
10. Cancelled or suspended certificates.
11. Penalty for acting as assistant, etc., during suspension or cancellation of registration.

*General*

12. Recognized scientific bodies and universities.
13. Investigation Tribunal.
14. Secretary of State empowered to make rules.

*Exemptions, etc.*

15. Psychopathic or hypnotic treatment by registered medical practitioners exempted.
16. Repeal.
17. Amendment.
18. Interpretation.
19. Application to Scotland.
20. Short Title, Citation, and Extent.

Be it enacted by the King's Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—

*Psychic practitioners, meetings and literature.*

1. (1) Subject to the provisions of this Act, no person shall, on or after the appointed day

- (a) practise for reward as a psychic practitioner as hereinafter defined without being duly registered under this Act,
- (b) act as manager for or representative of or assistant to any unregistered psychic practitioner practising for reward,
- (c) hold or convene or attempt to hold or convene or assist in holding or convening any public meeting for the purpose of exhibiting or demonstrating or attempting to exhibit or demonstrate psychic or occult phenomena, or at which such phenomena are exhibited or demonstrated or attempted or intended to be exhibited or demonstrated, or at which psychic or occult matters are or are intended to be the subject of any lecture or discussion, or, being an owner or occupier of premises, cause or permit such premises to be used for any of the purposes aforesaid,
- (d) cause or permit any child or young person to be present at any exhibition or demonstration or attempted exhibition or demonstration of psychic or occult phenomena or at any lecture or discussion relating thereto,
- (e) distribute or cause to be distributed or be concerned in distributing any document which to his knowledge contains
  - (i) any invitation to the public to attend any such meeting, lecture or discussion as aforesaid,
  - (ii) any offer to the public of goods as having psychic or occult properties, or any descriptive matter relating thereto,
  - (iii) any offer of tuition or instruction in psychic or occult matters,
  - (iv) any matter whatsoever relating to the activities of any living unregistered psychic practitioner, other than *bonâ-fide* reports of proceedings in a Court of Law or before the Investigation Tribunal constituted under this Act, or reports the publication whereof has been duly authorized by the Secretary of State under this Act,
  - (v) any information calculated to lead directly or indirectly to the doing of any act in contravention of this section by the recipient of the information,

- (f) have in his possession for the purpose of distribution any documents which to his knowledge are documents as aforesaid,
  - (g) being a society, club, church, company, firm or association, receive any commission profit or reward in connection with any demonstration or exhibition of psychic or occult phenomena, or any attempted demonstration or exhibition thereof, or any lecture or discussion relating thereto.
- (2) The preceding subsection shall not apply in relation to *bonâ-fide* research or instruction by members of the staff of any recognized scientific body or to the publications of such recognized scientific body.
  - (3) A person shall not be taken to contravene this section by reason only that he delivers or causes to be delivered to purchasers thereof, copies of any newspaper, journal, magazine or other periodical publication.

*Establishment of Registers.*

- 2. Every registration authority within the meaning of this Act shall establish and keep a Register of Psychic Practitioners. The Register shall be in the prescribed form and shall be open to inspection by any member of the public during ordinary office hours on payment of the prescribed fee.

*Applications for Registration.*

- 3. (1) Every psychic practitioner as hereinafter defined shall not more than six weeks nor less than twenty-one days before making any application to be registered under this Act, insert in a London daily newspaper in two different issues a notice stating that he intends to make such application: and shall give not less than seven days' notice in writing to the Registration Authority and to the Chief Officer of Police of the police area in which he intends to practise of his intention to apply for registration.
- (2) Every such notice as aforesaid shall contain particulars of every name which has at any time been used by the applicant or by which he has at any time been known.
- (3) It shall not be necessary to insert or give any such notices as aforesaid where the application is for the renewal without alteration of an existing certificate of registration.

*Particulars and Notices.*

- 4. (1) Every person making application to be registered under this Act shall furnish to the Registration Authority of the area in which he resides or if he has no fixed place of residence in Great Britain to any Registration Authority particulars in the prescribed form.

- (2) If any circumstance occurs in relation to any person registered under this Act which affects the accuracy of any particulars with respect to the person so registered in the Register of Psychic Practitioners, the person so registered shall forthwith in writing inform the Registration Authority with which he has been registered and shall forward to the Authority his Certificate of Registration to be amended, and on receipt of such information the Registration Authority may in its discretion
- (a) cause the entries respecting the person so registered and the Certificate to be amended or
  - (b) require the person so registered to renew his application to be registered, with or without a notice in the form prescribed by section 2 of this Act.
- (3) Upon any application for registration the Registration Authority may charge such fee not exceeding forty shillings as may be prescribed for such registration, but shall not be entitled to charge any fee for such amendments as aforesaid.

*Grant and extent of Registration Certificates.*

5. Upon any application by any person to be registered under this Act—
- (1) The Registration Authority shall hear and determine any questions arising out of such application, including any objections thereto.
  - (2) The Registration Authority shall have power to require the applicant to submit to such test as the Investigation Tribunal hereinafter referred to may require.
  - (3) The Registration Authority if satisfied that the applicant is a fit and proper person to be registered under this Act shall cause him to be so registered, and shall as soon as possible thereafter issue to him a Certificate of Registration under the hand of a duly authorized Officer of the Registration Authority. Such Certificate shall be in the prescribed form and shall, unless previously revoked or determined as hereinafter provided, be valid for one year or for such less period as the Registration Authority shall think fit. Any document purporting to be such Certificate shall be evidence of the facts to which it relates.
  - (4) The Registration Authority shall immediately on the issue of a Certificate of Registration and on any entry or amendment of an entry in the Register of Psychic Practitioners being made transmit to the Secretary of State in such manner as may be prescribed particulars of such registration, entry or amendment.



*Power to require Undertakings.*

6. The Registration Authority in granting any such application as aforesaid shall have power to impose upon any person making such application such conditions and restrictions and to require from him such undertaking as it shall think fit; and such conditions undertakings and restrictions shall be entered in the Register and Certificate as aforesaid.

*Refusal and Cancellation of Registration.*

7. (1) The Registration Authority may refuse to register any applicant or may cancel the registration of any psychic practitioner
  - (a) if such applicant, or such psychic practitioner, as the case may be
    - (i) fails or refuses to furnish such information as the Registration Authority in accordance with the regulations to be made hereunder may require, or
    - (ii) furnishes any incorrect information or fails to correct any incorrect information previously furnished, or
    - (iii) fails or refuses to submit to any required test as aforesaid,
  - (b) if it appears to the Registration Authority that
    - (i) by reason of any report by the Investigation Authority, or
    - (ii) by reason of such applicant, or such psychic practitioner having been convicted in the United Kingdom of an offence his conviction for which necessarily involved a finding that he acted fraudulently or dishonestly, or having been convicted of an offence under this Act, or having committed a breach of any rules or regulations made by the Secretary of State hereunder or of any condition imposed by any Registration Authority hereunder,
    - (iii) by reason of any circumstance whatever reflecting discredit upon such applicant or such psychic practitioner

the applicant or the psychic practitioner as the case may be is not, or is no longer, a fit or proper person to be registered under this Act.
- (2) Any registered psychic practitioner whose registration has been cancelled as aforesaid shall forthwith deliver up his Certificate to the Registration Authority which has issued the same.

- (3) Particulars of such refusal or cancellation shall forthwith be transmitted to the Secretary of State in such manner as may be prescribed.

*Offences.*

8. If any person shall on or after the appointed day

- (a) practise for reward as a psychic practitioner without being in possession of a valid Certificate of Registration under this Act,
- (b) act as manager for or representative of or assistant to any unregistered psychic practitioner practising for reward,
- (c) supply false or misleading or incorrect particulars to the Registration Authority or fail within a reasonable time to inform the Registration Authority of any change of circumstances or to forward to the Registration Authority his Certificate in accordance with the provisions of this Act,
- (d) apply (except as is hereinafter provided) to be registered as a psychic practitioner after his registration has been cancelled or while it is suspended,
- (e) fail to produce to the Court or the hearing of any charge under this Act his Certificate (if any) of Registration without reasonable cause, or produce a false Certificate,
- [(f) being a company or firm or association of which any person whose registration has been cancelled or suspended is a director or manager or by any other means has control, or is a partner as the case may be, apply to be registered as a psychic practitioner,]
- (g) do any act in contravention of the provisions of this Act or of any regulations made thereunder or of any conditions undertakings or restrictions imposed by a Registration Authority or cause or permit any premises to be used in contravention thereof,

he shall be guilty of an offence under this Act.

*Penalties.*

- 9. (1) Any offence under this Act shall render the person committing the same liable, on conviction on indictment to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or to a fine not exceeding five hundred pounds or to both such imprisonment and such fine, or on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or to a fine not exceeding one hundred pounds, or to both such imprisonment and

such fine, and in addition to any other penalty the Court may in its discretion:—

- (a) order the Certificate of any registered psychic practitioner to be delivered up and the registration to be cancelled;
  - (b) order the Certificate of any registered psychic practitioner to be delivered up and the registration to be suspended for such a period as the Court may deem fit;
  - (c) order the person convicted to pay the whole or any part of the costs of the prosecution.
- (2) Any person affected by an order made under this section may appeal to a Court of Quarter Sessions in the manner provided by the Summary Jurisdiction Acts.
- (3) An order made under this Act shall not come into force until seven days after it is made or if an appeal has been entered within that period until the determination of the appeal.
- (4) Where an offence under this Act is committed by a company or association the chairman and every director and every officer or other person concerned in the management of the company or association shall be deemed to have committed the like offence unless he proves that the act constituting the offence took place without his knowledge.
- (5) Proceedings for an offence under this Act shall not in England be instituted except by or with the consent of the Chief Officer of Police of the police area in which the offence, or if more than one of such offences, is alleged to have been committed provided that this subsection shall not prevent the arrest, or the issue or execution of a warrant for the arrest, of any person in respect of such offence, or the remanding, in custody or on bail, of any person charged with such an offence, notwithstanding that the necessary consent to the institution of proceedings for the offence has not been obtained.
- (6) If a Justice of the Peace is satisfied by information on oath that there is reasonable ground for suspecting that, at any such premises as may be specified in the information, a person has any documents in his possession in contravention of the provisions of this Act, the Justice may grant a warrant under his hand empowering any constable to enter the premises, if necessary by force, at any time or times within one month from the date of the warrant, and to search for, and seize and remove, any documents found therein which he has reasonable ground for believing to be in the possession of a person in contravention of this section.

- (7) Any document seized under this section may be retained for a period of one month or, if within that period there are commenced any proceedings for an offence under this section to which the document is relevant, until the conclusion of those proceedings.
- (8) Where any person is convicted of an offence under this section, the Court dealing with the case may make an order authorizing the destruction, or the disposal in any other specified manner, of any documents produced to the Court which are shown to its satisfaction to be documents in respect of which the offence was committed:

Provided that an order under this subsection shall not authorize the destruction, or the disposal in any other manner, of a document, until the conclusion of the proceedings in the matter of which the order is made.

- (9) Subject to the provisions of the last two preceding subsections, the Police (Property) Act 1897 (which makes provision with respect to the disposal of property in the possession of the police) shall apply to property which has come into the possession of the police in consequence of a seizure under this section, as it applies to property which has come into the possession of the Police in the circumstances mentioned in that Act.

*Cancelled or Suspended Certificates.*

- 10. (1) Any registered psychic practitioner whose registration has been ordered to be cancelled or suspended under the last preceding section shall forthwith deliver up his Certificate to the Clerk of the Court by which the order has been made, and the Clerk of the Court shall as soon as the order comes into force endorse the Certificate with a record of the order for cancellation or suspension, as the case may be, and shall forward the said Certificate so endorsed to the Registration Authority by which the said Certificate was issued, and the said Registration Authority shall thereupon cause entry of such cancellation or suspension to be made in the Register of Psychic Practitioners, and in the case of suspension shall, when the period of suspension has expired, return the Certificate to the psychic practitioner at the address entered on the Certificate, and in the case of cancellation shall retain the said Certificate.
- (2) Where any order as to cancellation or suspension of registration has been made as aforesaid, the Clerk of the Court shall send notice thereof to the Secretary of State in the prescribed manner.

- (3) Any person whose registration has been cancelled, may after giving notice in the prescribed manner to the Registration Authority by which his former Certificate was issued of his intention so to do, apply to the Investigation Tribunal appointed by the Secretary for State for a recommendation that he be registered as a psychic practitioner, and the examining body, if satisfied after the applicant has complied with such test or examination as such Tribunal may think fit that such person should be registered, may make such recommendation subject to such conditions as it may think fit:

Provided that no recommendation shall be made under this section unless a period of at least twelve months has elapsed since the former registration was cancelled.

- (4) Where any such recommendation has been made, the applicant may make application to be registered as a psychic practitioner to the Registration Authority and the provisions of Sections 2, 3 and 4 of this Act shall apply to such application:

Provided that upon such application no further test shall be required by the Registration Authority.

*Penalty for Acting as Assistant, etc.*

11. Any person whose registration as a psychic practitioner has been cancelled or suspended shall be guilty of an offence under this Act if at any time while his registration is cancelled or suspended he acts as manager for or representative of or assistant to any psychic practitioner.

*Recognized Bodies.*

12. (1) The Secretary of State may by order declare any body of persons to be a recognized Scientific Body or a recognized university for the purposes of this Act.
- (2) Any order under this Section may be varied or revoked by a subsequent order of the Secretary of State.
- (3) It shall be the duty of every recognized Scientific Body and every recognized university to furnish to the Secretary of State so often as may be prescribed a list of all persons who are members of such Scientific Body or university as the case may be, and a further list of all members as may be qualified to investigate psychic and occult matters.

*Investigation Tribunal.*

13. (1) For the purposes of this Act there shall be an Investigation Tribunal consisting of a Chairman who shall be a member of the legal profession appointed by the Lord Chancellor and four persons who shall be members of

- a recognized Scientific Body or a recognized university appointed by the Secretary of State.
- (2) For the purpose of any investigation under this Act the Investigation Tribunal shall be empowered to determine the time and place at which and the conditions under which any test required by it shall be held; and shall report the result of every such investigation in the prescribed manner to the Secretary of State.
- (3) The Investigation Authority shall have power to make such recommendations as it may think fit with regard to the granting, cancellation, suspension or withholding of any registration.
- (4) Where any such investigation has been made in accordance with the requirements of a Registration Authority, the Investigation Tribunal shall as soon as possible after such investigation has taken place furnish the Registration Authority concerned with a copy of any report or recommendation thereon, and if any person having been required or having applied to submit to investigation by the Tribunal fails or refuses to submit to any test prescribed by it, such failure or such refusal shall be reported in the prescribed manner to the Secretary of State.

*Secretary of State to make Rules.*

- 14. The Secretary of State shall make rules for prescribing anything which is required or authorized to be prescribed under this Act, and generally for carrying this Act into effect.

*Exemption of Registered Medical Practitioners.*

- 15. Nothing in this Act shall affect or apply in relation to *bonâ-fide* psychopathic or hypnotic treatment by any registered practitioner.

*Repeal.*

- 16. On the appointed day the Witchcraft Act, 1735, shall so far as it related to England, Wales and Scotland cease to have effect.

*Amendment.*

- 17. On and after the appointed day Section 4 of The Vagrancy Act, 1824 shall so far as it relates to England, Wales and Scotland . . .

*Interpretation.*

- 18. In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires, the following expressions have the meanings hereby assigned to them respectively, that is to say:

'the appointed day' means such day as the Secretary<sup>f</sup> of State may by order appoint.

'children' and 'young persons' shall have the same meanings as in the Children and Young Persons Act, 1933.

'Police Area,' 'Chief Officer of Police' as respects the City of London mean the City and the Commissioner of City Police, and elsewhere have the same meanings as in the Police Act, 1890.

'prescribed' means prescribed by regulations of the Secretary of State.

'psychic practitioner' includes (i) any medium and (ii) any person who exercises or professes to exercise psychic or occult or magic powers or who holds himself out as possessing such powers and (iii) any person who professes or attempts to communicate with the spirits of deceased or unborn persons or to make such spirits perceptible by living persons and (iv) any person who professes or attempts by psychic or occult means to move material objects or to acquire knowledge of, foretell, or influence future or distant events or to diagnose, alleviate, cure, inflict or increase bodily or other ailments and (v) any person who practises or professes to practise mediumship, clairvoyance, crystal gazing, palmistry, necromancy, conjuration, divination or any other magical psychic or occult sciences and (vi) any person who professes or attempts to produce either himself or with or through another or others psychic, magic or occult phenomena.

'recognized scientific body' means a body of persons declared by an order of the Secretary of State for the time being in force to be a recognized scientific body.

'recognized university' means a body of persons declared by an order of the Secretary of State for the time being in force to be a recognized university.

'registered medical practitioner' shall have the same meaning as in the Medical Acts.

'registered psychic practitioner' means a person registered under this Act.

'registration authority' for the purposes of this Act means the Common Council of the City of London or the Council of a County or County Borough.

*Application to Scotland.*

19. This Act shall apply to Scotland subject to the following modifications:—

(To be considered.)

*Short Title, Citation, and Extent.*

20. (1) This Act may be cited as the Psychic Practitioners (Regulation) Act, 1939.  
(2) This Act shall not extend to Northern Ireland.

## FIRST SCHEDULE

PSYCHIC PRACTITIONERS (REGULATION) ACT, 1939

## Form of Register

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5	Column 6	Remarks										
Name under which the psychic practitioner will practise. Where the psychic practitioner is a firm or partnership or incorporated Co. this should be stated.	<p>Either— (a) the address at which the psychic practitioner will practise, or (b) a permanent postal address from which letters directed to the P.P. will be forwarded.</p>	<p>The true name of the P.P. in full. If the P.P. is a firm or partnership all the members must be given: if an incorporated Company the names of all the directors and secretary must be given.</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Surname</td><td>Christ. Name</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td></td></tr> </table>	Surname	Christ. Name			<p>In respect of each person whose name is given in Col. 3</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>(a) the address at which he resides.</td><td>(b) his nationality.</td><td>(c) every other name which he is now using or has at any time used or by which he has been known.</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>	(a) the address at which he resides.	(b) his nationality.	(c) every other name which he is now using or has at any time used or by which he has been known.				Date of Registration and Date of expiration of certificate.	<p>Prs. of any cancellation or suspension of registration including the name of Court by which order was made, date on which order came into force, period of suspension.</p>	
Surname	Christ. Name															
(a) the address at which he resides.	(b) his nationality.	(c) every other name which he is now using or has at any time used or by which he has been known.														



## SECOND SCHEDULE

## PSYCHIC PRACTITIONERS (REGULATION) ACT, 1939

*Form of Notice of Intention to Register*

Notice is hereby given that.....(a)  
 residing at .....(b)  
 and practising under the name of.....(c)  
 intends to apply to the.....(d)  
 for registration under the above Act.  
 (Date).....

Particulars of all names used by the above applicant or by  
 which he or she has at any time been known.....

(a) Here insert the true name of the person or persons making  
 the application for registration.

(b) Here insert fixed place of residence in Great Britain, if any.

(c) Here insert the name under which the Psychic Practitioner  
 will practise. This may be omitted in the case of an incorporated  
 Company practising under its corporate name.

(d) Here insert the designation of the registration authority,  
 viz., County Council of..... or County Borough  
 Council of ..... or Common Council of the City of  
 London as the case may be.

## THIRD SCHEDULE

## PSYCHIC PRACTITIONERS (REGULATION) ACT, 1939

*Form of Application for Registration*

I, } the undersigned, do hereby apply for registration under the Psychic Practitioners (Regulation) Act, 1939, and  
 We, } do hereby declare the following particulars to be true and complete Particulars.\*

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 6
Name under which the psychic practitioner will practise. Where the psychic practitioner registered is a firm or partnership or incorporated Co. this should be stated.	Either— (a) the address at which the psychic practitioner will practise, or (b) a permanent postal address from which letters directed to the P.P. will be forwarded.	The true name of the P.P. in full. If the P.P. is a firm or partnership the names of all the members must be given: if an incorporated Company the names of all the directors and secretary must be given.  Surname      Christian Name	In respect of each person whose name is given in Col. 3.  (a) the address at which he resides.  (b) his nationality.  (c) every other name which he is now using or has at any time used or by which he has been known.	Ptrs. of any cancellation or suspension of registration including the name of Court by which order was made, date on which order came into force, period of suspension.

Signature(s) .....

Date .....

\* It is not sufficient to leave any of these columns blank. If necessary, the word 'none' should be written. In Column 2 the entry 'none' will not be sufficient.

In the case of a firm, all partners must sign; in the case of an incorporated company the Chairman and the Secretary must sign.

## FOURTH SCHEDULE

## PSYCHIC PRACTITIONERS (REGULATION) ACT, 1939

## Certificate of Registration

This is to Certify that the Psychic Practitioner to whom the undermentioned particulars relate has this day been registered with the Registration authority of the { County } of { County Borough } of { City }  
 Period for which this Certificate remains valid.....  
 Date.....  
 Serial No. of Entry in Register.....  
 Signature of officer in charge of the register.....

## PARTICULARS

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
<i>Name</i> under which the psychic practitioner will practise. Where the psychic practitioner registered is a firm or partnership or incorporated Co. this should be stated.	<i>Either—</i> (a) the address at which the psychic practitioner will practise, or (b) a permanent postal address from which letters directed to the P.P. will be forwarded.	<div>The true name of the P.P. in full. If the P.P. is a firm or partnership the names of all the members must be given: if an incorporated Company the names of all the directors and secretary must be given.</div> <div>SurnameChristian Name</div>	<div>In respect of each person whose name is given in Col. 3.</div> <div><div>(a)the address at which he resides.</div><div>(b)his nationality.</div><div>(c)every other name which he is now using or has used or by which he has been known.</div></div>

N.B. If any circumstances occur in relation to the Psychic Practitioner affecting the accuracy of the above particulars, it is the duty of the Psychic Practitioner to inform the registration authority in writing forthwith and to forward this certificate to the authority for amendment.

## APPENDIX D

THE BEST BOOKS TO READ<sup>1</sup>

A GREAT deal of rubbish has been written on psychical research and spiritualism, and these books can be consulted in any large library of psychic works. I do not propose to include them in the Select Bibliography which follows. But as it is important to know where both the best and the worst books are to be found, I append a list of the principal collections, with the approximate number of volumes (books and pamphlets) each contains, where this number is ascertainable. In each case it is necessary for a reader to be a member of the organization which maintains the library, before he can borrow the books. The London University collection is not available to the general public. Where printed catalogues are issued, this is indicated by the letter *C* which follows the number of volumes.

## WHERE THE BOOKS CAN BE FOUND

'Harry Price Library of Magical Literature' in the University of London. (16,000 volumes, from 500 A.D. to present day. *C*.) Printed lists were issued as Part II, Vol. 1, of the *Proceedings* of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research (1929); and *Bulletin I (Supplement)* of the University of London Council for Psychical Investigation (1935). A further *Supplement* will appear in due course.

British Society for Psychical Research (7,632 volumes, *C*). Printed lists were issued as Parts 104, 108, 113, 120, and 133 of the Society's *Proceedings*. Supplemental lists are issued from time to time.

London Spiritualist Alliance, Ltd. (10,000 volumes, *C*.)

International Institute for Psychical Investigation (comprising the former British College of Psychic Science, Ltd., and the International Institute for Psychical Research, Ltd.). (3,000 volumes, *C*.)

American Society for Psychical Research, New York.

Boston Society for Psychical Research, Boston, Mass.

Institut Métapsychique, Paris.

<sup>1</sup> The books in this Appendix have not been included in the Index, unless mentioned in the text.

## A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

**Current periodical literature**<sup>1</sup>:—*Bulletins* of the University of London Council for Psychical Investigation; *Proceedings and Journals* of the British and American Societies for Psychical Research; *Bulletins* of the Boston (Mass.) S.P.R.; *Psychic Science* (International Institute for Psychical Investigation); *Journal of Parapsychology* (Duke Univ., North Carolina); *British Journal of Psychology* (Cambridge); *Mind* (London); *Occult Review* (London); *Character and Personality* (London); *Light* (weekly spiritualist journal, London).

**Periodicals in foreign languages**:—*Revue Métapsychique* (Paris); *Ricerca Psichica* (Milan); *Psykisk Tidsskrift* (Oslo); *Tijdschrift voor Parapsychologie* (Amsterdam).

**The best books**:—The following books have been very carefully selected as being the best for the student and dispassionate inquirer who wish to hear the arguments both for and against psychical research and spiritualism. The books are authoritative and informative, or of historical or experimental interest, and are the work of responsible persons who have made a study of what they write about. Though some will be found only in specialized collections, many should be available in the large public libraries. In any case, every book listed can be found on the shelves of one or other of the London organizations which are mentioned in this Appendix. A study of the books listed below, together with those cited in the text, should enable the reader to judge impartially the truth or otherwise of 'paranormal phenomena.' Better still, let him experiment for himself, or join the Society for Psychical Research or similar organization.

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